BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Kui Seu Hew

Kui Seu Hew, the second of eight children, was born March 17, 1907, in Wailuku, Maui. His father Sing Cha Hew, also known as Ah Sing, worked in various locations around Maui before settling in Pā'ia Camp where he worked as a cook for the Maui Agricultural Company. While in Pā'ia, Hew attended Pā'ia School. He then went to Kula in his sixth-grade year to live with his grandparents and attend Chinese-language school there. Later, he attended Maui High and Grammar School.

During the summers, Hew worked in the pineapple industry on Maui, picking fruits and making crates for Ha'ikū Fruit & Packing Company. He also continued his education at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, where he majored in general business and accounting.

After graduating in 1929, Hew left Honolulu for work on Moloka'i. After a year, he returned to Maui and worked at Maui Dry Goods & Grocery Company, Limited. At the same time, he also helped part-time at the T. Ah Fook general store.

Once the war started, the U.S. Engineer Department recruited Hew to work as an accountant. Later, he transferred to Naval Air Station, Pu'unēnē, and became a personnel manager for civilians in the ship service department.

After the war, Hew worked for a short time at the Maui County waterworks department, then opened his own small accounting business. In 1955, Ah Fook's Super Market moved into Kahului Shopping Center, and Hew worked there full time until his retirement in 1984. He continues to reside in Wailuku.

Tape Nos. 22-101-1-93 and 22-102-1-93

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Kui Seu Hew (KH)

August 27, 1993

Wailuku, Maui

BY: Jonylle Sato (JS)

JS: This is an interview with Mr. Kui Seu Hew at his home in Wailuku, Maui. Today is August 27, 1993. The interviewer is Jonylle Sato.

Okay, Mr. Hew, why don't we begin with when and where you were born.

KH: Well, I was born in Wailuku, Maui, March 17, 1907.

JS: And where were your parents from?

KH: My parents are from China. My father [Sing Cha Hew, also known as Ah Sing] is from a village in Kwangtung [Province], what they call Pukak. And my mother [Ngun Moi Hew] was born in Kowloon, British possession.

JS: Oh, British possession?

KH: Yeah. British possession. It's right across from Hong Kong. There's a little section the British people took over.

JS: And when did they come to Hawai'i?

KH: Oh, I don't know. It was before 1900.

JS: And do you know why they came?

KH: Well, I know why because in my father's village, they had a famine at that time. The people were starving. And so at that time, the plantations were recruiting laborers to come to Hawai'i. He came with them.

JS: So, did he meet your mother here?

KH: Yeah, they got married on Maui. Yeah, he met her on Maui.

JS: Okay, so your father came because of the famine . . .

KH: Famine, yeah.

JS: And why did your mother come here, then?

KH: Well, she came with her parents that time because her parents came. And at first her father came and he used to have a farm. He went to Kohala. And from Kohala, he drifted to Pā'ia, and then to Kula. And then, it was about, oh, fourteen years later that he brought her to Kula.

JS: From China?

KH: China, yeah. From Kowloon. She came with my grandmother.

JS: So then, what was your grandfather, you know, what was he doing on Maui?

KH: A farmer.

JS: On the plantation?

KH: No, no. In Kula.

JS: In Kula.

KH: Yeah.

JS: So, he had his own land there or he worked for somebody?

KH: That was homestead land. And I think he bought it after a while.

JS: Okay, and then he brought your grandmother and your mother over to Kula?

KH: Yeah.

JS: Do you know how long they were up there in Kula?

KH: No. . . . I remember going up to that place when I was a small child, so (1915). . . . It must have [been] in the late 1890s or [since] the first few years of 1900s. Next time, *bumbai* I'll try to do a little research on that. Because I know we had it somewheres, but it's been so long.

JS: So, what kind of farming was your grandfather doing?

KH: Oh, general farming. You know, in those days, they used to plant potatoes, corn—field corn—sweet potatoes, red beans, and then they raised chickens and pigs.

JS: And was this just for the family or to sell also?

KH: Whatever they do, what he really did was, he raised enough for the family, and then after a while he became a peddler. He used to come down from Kula to Pā'ia, sometimes to Lahaina, on horseback and with a string of donkeys. On the donkeys, he load his vegetables and chickens, you know (chuckles). And he go out and peddle these in the camps. It takes one-day trip from Kula to Pā'ia in those days.

JS: How would he trade the vegetables?

KH: Oh, he'd get cash for it, yeah. Eggs, I think, well, twenty-five cents a dozen. A chicken, a dollar apiece. I used to go with him to the camps just for the horseback riding. (Chuckles) I was a small child, youngster then. Young, yeah.

JS: And was your grandmother doing any kind of work?

KH: Well, she helps in the farm.

JS: Okay, and how did your parents meet then?

KH: Oh, that, I don't know. That's something else.

(Laughter)

JS: Well, what about your father's side then? Your father just came by himself?

KH: Yeah, my father came by himself.

JS: Okay. So where did he work at?

KH: Chee, he used to work, oh, all over the island. I was born in Wailuku and then we went to Kīhei, and to Kula, but then he went to work for the M.A. Company [Maui Agricultural Company] as a cook after a while.

JS: But when he first came to Maui, do you know what kind of work he was doing?

KH: Actually no, but I heard that at first they wanted him to be a tailor but he didn't like the work, so he became a cook. He likes to cook.

JS: So was he a tailor in China or something?

KH: No, because he was a youngster when he came over. In fact, without any trade or anything.

JS: So he was about---do you know about how old when he came over?

KH: There's a history someplace. I don't know. You know, in those days, we don't care about those things.

JS: Okay. But he was working for a plantation when he first came over?

KH: No. As I say, he was supposed to be a tailor when he came over, with one of our cousins. And he didn't like it. He was, oh, fifteen or sixteen years old, I think, when he came over.

JS: So instead he worked as a cook?

KH: Then he became a cook.

JS: Okay. So once your mother and father got together then, was your mother doing any kind of

work also?

KH: No, only housework. You know, in those days the girls don't go out. They either stay home or help around the house until they get married and go out.

JS: And did you have any brothers or sisters?

KH: Me?

JS: Mm hmm.

KH: Yeah. We had eight in the family—four boys and four girls. But now there's only four of us left.

JS: And what number were you in the family?

KH: Number two.

JS: Number two? Okay. So you were born in Wailuku. So is that where you grew up in? Or how long were you in Wailuku?

KH: I really don't know. Because we travel all over the place. My father go all over, looking for work. And somehow, I don't know how he—he never used to work for the plantation until he became a cook at Pā'ia, at the old Pā'ia Camp Store [owned and run by the Maui Agricultural Company].

JS: And about when was that?

KH: Just around World War I. Maybe one or two years before that.

JS: So before that, you folks were just traveling around?

KH: Yeah, just. . . .

JS: So tell me a little bit more about how your home was if you were traveling so many different places. What kind of places did you folks live?

KH: Well, by present-day standards, they're just plain shacks (chuckles). I remember in Kula where my grandfather was, we used to have dirt-floor kitchen. The homes were built out of one-by-twelves [pieces of lumber] and with what you call those battens there between the wall, between the one-by-twelves so that the wind and the rain won't get in. I guess it's kind of hard for you to imagine because you never see those homes. But in those days, practically everybody had that kind of homes. For a stove, they used to have two lengths of pipe on bricks. And over there, they put a stove, a wood stove, and do their cooking. That's all.

JS: And was that inside or outside?

KH: In the house.

JS: And how did you folks get these houses or who owned these houses?

KH: Oh, they own it themselves, my grandparents. But it's kind of hard for you to imagine what those times look like until you see those, you know.

JS: What was the first place you remember living at?

KH: Maybe Pā'ia Camp.

JS: And how old were you then?

KH: Let's see. I was in [there until] the sixth grade, no the fifth grade. Oh, I must've been [there from] about five, six years old.

JS: So what do you remember about that Pā'ia Camp? What kind of place was it?

KH: Oh, it's nice. I remember we didn't have too many Chinese people there—I mean, families. Single men, they're living, well, you might call them army barracks. One long house, you know, with four to a room (chuckles). Small little room. And each row of houses, the barracks, they were called Camp 1, then the next one is Camp 2, Camp 3, Camp 4, Camp 5, and Camp 6. All just right above the camp store where my father used to work in.

JS: And so the camp that you folks were in, what kind of people were there with you?

KH: Well, that camp, Pā'ia Camp, Pā'ia, that was a big camp, one of the biggest on Maui. We have Japanese people, and we have Portuguese people, Hawaiian people, Puerto Rican people, Korean people. And later, we have Filipinos coming in during the World War I.

JS: And how did everybody get along?

KH: Well, as far as I'm concerned, everybody get along all right. You know, people, well, they don't have transportation in those days. And everyplace they go walking. Because they work so hard, the people don't get into mischief. Everybody works, even the kids. When they're only youngsters, they go out and pick *kiawe* beans or work in the plantation during the weekends or the vacations. The plantation would give 'em about ten cents a bag of *kiawe* beans, something like that (chuckles). Hard to imagine right now, but.

I know I used to play mostly with the Japanese boys of my age because in the beginning we were the first Chinese family in that camp, right around anyway, within walking distance. So I play with the Japanese boys because the camp is right above us, and that side, they all Japanese people. And the one thing I always remember, we used to run in and out of the houses. Nobody lock the door in those days. We go, we see money on the table, we never touch it. Fantastic when you compare to what things are now. Over here now, yeah, as soon as you out the door you got to lock it up. But in those days, no. No house was ever locked, I think. That's the greatest thing I remember about the camp life. I used to remember in those days the Japanese people would have their own homes and every one, right alongside the house, would have a row of vegetables, maybe two, for their own use. And we never bother. We just go in, go out.

In fact, after a few years ago, some of these old ladies would see me, they look at me, they say, "You Ah Sing boy?"

I say, "Yeah." That's my father's name. I say, "Yeah."

They say, "Long time no see you, *no?*" (Chuckles)

But that was the greatest thing I remember. Nobody locks his home. You can go in and out. And we never touch anybody's property.

JS: How long did you folks stay there?

KH: We stayed in Pā'ia for a good—up to the time I was in the sixth grade. [Although KH's family lived in Pā'ia at the time, KH was separated from them and lived with his grandparents for one year while he attended sixth grade in a Kula school.] And then we moved to H. Poko [Hāmākua Poko] one year because my father was transferred as a cook to H. Poko. And then we came back to Pā'ia Camp again until he left. What year, I don't know.

JS: So at the Pā'ia Camp, your father was working at the camp store, right?

KH: Yeah, as a cook.

JS: As a cook.

KH: He used to cook mostly for some of the supervisors, mostly *Haole* boys. Because in those days only *Haole*s can become supervisors. (Chuckles)

JS: Do you know how the relation was with the *Haole* supervisors?

KH: You know, I think because of the lack of education and all that. . . . They go with their own people. It's like you have layers of society. The *Haole*s on top, then next come the Portuguese, and then after that the Orientals. It's almost like caste system then you go, because. . . . In those days, nobody mingle with the *Haole*s. They in a class of their own.

JS: How did your father feel about serving them their food and things?

KH: Meaning?

JS: What did he think about doing his work for the *Haole* supervisors?

KH: Well, it's just a job for him, cooking for them. Well, he cooked for the other people, too, but his main job was to feed these supervisors. Then he mix coffee in the morning, bread in the morning. They don't buy bread in those days. He makes 'em. And then, the camp people, the Japanese people, the Portuguese people, whoever, they come with a coffee pot. "Make me coffee." You seen those old styles of coffee pots? It's almost like a pitcher. Well, you fill it up with coffee, add cream and sugar. And then he had bread, oh, about a pound size. He cut it in half. It's almost like it's French bread. They cut in half, put butter and jelly. All for ten cents. Can you imagine? (Chuckles)

JS: What school did you go to when you were in . . .

KH: Well, at that time, I was in Pā'ia School through the fifth grade. Then I went to Kēōkea School in Kula for one year [while KH's family continued to reside in Pā'ia]. Then at that

time my father moved to H. Poko for one year. That's when I attend Maui [High and] Grammar School. That's a [English] standard school in those [days]. Was mostly for the people who speak English.

JS: So what do you remember---what kind of school was Pā'ia School?

KH: Public school.

JS: What kind of students were there?

KH: All kinds. Students. Because schooling was compulsory.

JS: What about the teachers? What kind of teachers were there?

KH: Oh, mostly White people, I think. Then we started have some Hawaiians. I don't remember any. . . . No, there was a couple of Chinese teachers, school. Chinese—I mean, at least Chinese descent. But I don't remember any Japanese teachers at that time. Maybe I wasn't in their classes.

JS: And how did everyone get along in the classrooms?

KH: All right. Of course, school, in those days, it's not like now. Discipline was enforced. If somebody did something wrong and he got a spanking for it, he go home tell his parents, he get another licking, you know. It's not like now. If somebody scold a student, the student go tell the parents, the parents go after the teacher instead (chuckles). So discipline was. . . . Because most of us don't like to go home and have a licking, one after another.

JS: Why did you go to Kēōkea School in Kula?

KH: Oh, (chuckles) my parents want me to learn some Chinese. They felt that because I was alone, we were the only Chinese family in Pā'ia, I should learn. When people talk to me, know what they talking about in Chinese. But I stayed there only one year.

JS: So that was for Chinese[-language] school?

KH: Well, there was Kēōkea School, a public school, and then there was after school, we go to the Chinese[-language] school for one hour, too. It's just like the old Japanese-language school. But it didn't do any good because I just stay there for maybe eight, nine months.

JS: So tell me a little bit more about the Chinese[-language] school in Kula. Where were the students from?

KH: Oh, right around the neighborhood. Kēōkea, Kula, actually was a Chinese community with Hawaiians, you know. Because the Hawaiians, well, they own the land, most of them, they still. And the rest were only Chinese people in Kēōkea, Kula, a place they call Waiohuli, and up to Waiakoa. There's a whole lot of different places where in between that—I've forgotten the names—really were part of the community. But they were lumped together as Kula. It's just like maybe a little district with separate names to each location.

JS: So most of the students were from there?

KH: Yeah, mm hmm.

JS: So were there a lot of students like you who came from someplace else?

KH: No, most of the---I was the only one that was an, well, an outsider (chuckles). All the rest were people right along the county. Because I remember in that school---of course, it's a small school. But in my little room, there were two classes, the fifth and the sixth grades. We have a couple of Portuguese people, some Hawaiians, and the rest Chinese.

JS: And this was at which school?

KH: That's Kēōkea School.

JS: Kēōkea School.

KH: Yeah. And because it was predominantly, what do you call? How shall I word it? The Chinese community. All these Hawaiian boys out there, of my age or some are older than me, they all talk Chinese. Every so often I meet somebody. He start talking to me in Chinese. So I always ask them where they come from. They say Kula or 'Ulupalakua. Just about week and a half, two weeks ago, just as an example, I was in Komoda Store [& Bakery]. A big Hawaiian boy was mopping the floor. He saw me. He say, "You Chinese?"

I say, "Yeah."

"Are you Hakka?"

I say, "Yeah."

And then he start to talk to me [in Chinese], you know. I look at him. I say, "Where do you come from? Kula?"

"No," he said, "my parents or grandparents used to live in Kula." It becomes the lingo there because you know how it is. If you go to a mixed group, you always pick up the language which the predominant groups talk.

(Laughter)

JS: So what kinds of things did they teach you in the Chinese[-language] school?

KH: Oh, just plain. Just learn the language. How to write the sun, and the moon, and all those things. Oh, did you ever go to Japanese[-language] school?

JS: Mm hmm.

KH: Yeah, you know, you have to start from the beginning. We all recite the moon, the sun. They got some kind of rhythm to it. I forget all those things.

JS: In the Chinese[-language] school, did they teach you anything about China?

KH: Ah, no. Because . . .

JS: Just language.

KH: Yeah, just language. I didn't stay long enough anyhow. Only nine months, eh?

JS: So why did you decide to leave over there?

KH: Because the sixth grade is the highest they taught, the school [Kēōkea School]. So when I went to H. Poko, Hāmākua Poko, where the Maui High and Grammar School was at that time, I went to that school.

JS: And that's because you said your father was transferred, right?

KH: Yeah, he was transferred there. And I was supposed to go to Pā'ia School from Hāmākua Poko. You know where Hāmākua Poko is? You know where all those buildings are, the school buildings? And Pā'ia School, well, we're supposed to go to Pā'ia School because they used to furnish us transportation, the plantation. But somehow my parents didn't like the idea of me going to Pā'ia School. So my father took me to Maui Grammar School. He saw the principal. So after a few questions, I was admitted.

JS: So what do you remember about Maui Grammar School? How was it? Was there any difference between there and the other schools you went to?

KH: Oh, yeah. Big difference. Maui Grammar, supposed to be—well, let's see if I can find someplace I can kind of—you ever see a [English] standard school in the old days? I don't think so because year '23, yeah. But they have this school, so-called [English] standard school, where only the—well, people speak just English. No second language for them. You know, with the White people. At that time, already some Orientals and some Hawaiians. In other words, it's something like it belongs to the—this is a school for the upper-class students (chuckles). You know what I mean. [English standard schools were established in the 1920s primarily for *Haole* students and the few non-*Haole* students who met a certain standard of English-language proficiency. This system lasted until 1949.] But we got along fine. In the grammar school, I think I was the only Chinese student. That's because I was in H. Poko, living at that time. And we have three other---no, there's Renzo [Takumi], there's Higuchi, what's this other boy's name? And one girl. Four Japanese girls in that school. And they all from H. Poko itself.

JS: So at like Pā'ia School, did they teach you using other languages than English?

KH: No, not in Pā'ia School. Maui Grammar, yes. They taught us French. And my French teacher, after a while, went to Punahou [School].

JS: So how long were you at Maui Grammar School?

KH: Grades seven and eight.

JS: And what kind of teachers were there?

KH: What do you mean, "What kind of teachers?"

JS: What nationality?

KH: All *Haole*s, they're all White people. Because it was, in those old days, the [English] standard school are strictly for, it came to begin for the *Haole* kids. Well, just like you'd say, Punahou in the old days. Because if you know Punahou, at first there were only White people and a few Hawaiians of the upper class. And then after a while, they start get different people.

JS: What about the community? How was H. Poko different from Pā'ia?

KH: Well, H. Poko was a small community. In a way, we know everybody in the community. Outside of that, it's almost like Pā'ia. Those days, you still can run in and out of the different homes. Of course, our parents were kind of strict. They didn't want us to go. Because as they say, if something happened, they don't want me to be blamed (chuckles) for it, you know. They say, "You can stay outside, play with them, but don't go in their homes." So that's it.

JS: And then after H. Poko you folks went back to Pā'ia . . .

KH: To Pā'ia Camp, yeah.

JS: And your father was doing what kind of work then?

KH: He was still the cook.

JS: Still cook?

KH: Yeah.

JS: So then where did you go to school from there?

KH: From there I went to Maui—I finished Maui High [School], went over there [from] Pā'ia. And then I went to the U of H [University of Hawai'i at Mānoa].

JS: So when you were at Maui High School then, did you notice any kind of change there compared to the other schools?

KH: Well, now that I think of it, there is. Because as I said, there's mostly *Haole* kids. More *Haole* kids. But when it came to the high school, when we reach high school, we have lots of people from the camps, all the different camps. They used to go to Maui High by train. And they're mostly Japanese kids. There's some Portuguese people, but in the main it was Japanese kids. Because the Japanese people set quite a store on education, too. In fact, I think all Orientals do.

JS: So then your parents really wanted you to continue with school then?

KH: Oh, yeah. Especially my mother. No matter how poor we are, she always managed to do something to put us through school.

JS: And when you were in school then what kind of dreams did you have? What did you want to do?

KH: Oh, we never think of those things. We were too busy working. We were just thinking, "Oh, we got to get work after we get through high school." I remember I was working at the

cannery before. During the summer after my senior year [1925], I used to go to the old Ha'ikū Fruit [& Packing Company, Limited]. And all the time, I remember my principal told me before that, before I graduate, he asked me, "Oh, are you going to school after this?"

I said, "No." I said, "I got to work because we need the money. We got a big family and all that."

So he go, "Well, okay."

So I went to work for Ha'ikū Fruit. Well, then one day somebody came up to my mother to tell me to go to work for them, one of the plantation office. She said, "No. He's going to school." And I never knew anything about it. She just made up her mind. So when I came back, she told me, "Oh, so-and-so came to see you." Near friends—matter of fact, we're calabash [distantly or fictively related]. And he had a good job with the plantation in those days, you know, with the big concerns. Because if you work in the office, well, you're somebody (chuckles) in those days. Not like now.

So she tell, "Oh, yeah, you're going to school." That was almost the start of school for the U [University of Hawai'i]. In fact, Monday---no, Tuesday or Wednesday was supposed to be school started, and I went down.

A few days before then she told me. So off---then I went down to the [Maui High School] principal's office. He must have been in a good mood. I was wondering how I ever got to the university that way. I told him—that fellow's name was [Frank] Howard, by the way—"Mr. Howard, I think I can go to the university."

"Oh," he said, "Fine." So he said, "I'll fix the thing for you." The next day he came up. Called me up---came up to the house, I think. He say, "You get ready. Everything is all fixed up for you." I didn't have to take a test of any kind at that time. So I thought I was lucky, you know.

JS: Okay. Let me turn the tape over.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

JS: Okay. We're talking a little bit about when you went to UH. But before that, though, you said you were working at the cannery, right? And that was for . . .

KH: Yeah, during the summer.

JS: . . . for Ha'ikū?

KH: Yeah. In fact, I worked for Ha'ikū Fruit. After that I worked for Libby, McNeill [& Libby] when they opened up. And when I was going to university---I was still going to the university, yeah. And when Maui Pine [Maui Pineapple Company] started up, I went to work for them.

JS: So when did you first start working the part-time kind of job?

KH: In the cannery? When I was fourteen years old.

JS: And that was only during the summers?

KH: Yeah.

JS: So what kind of work was that?

KH: Well, the first time, they picked me—you know, when we went to work we were in the big room. They were taking—guys used to come in, say, was this foreman, "I need so many boys to work." So he say, "You, you, you, you go." And no questions asked or qualifications or anything. They just say, "You go." You just got to. If they say six guys, maybe the guy say he wants six guys, six people, he say, he pick out six in a group. You go with him like that. So, I went to pick pineapple. The second day---and I always like to tell this story because this seems so strange, and true. And I was the smallest in the bunch. I must have weighed about a hundred pounds. You know, in picking those pine—you ever seen the people pick pineapples in those days with a knapsack? You go pick the pineapples, put it in the bag, and then you go down the line. Then when it's filled, you come back to the road with a whole big load. He [the foreman] came there, we were having lunch. He talked to me. He say, "What school you go?"

I say, "Oh, Maui High."

He said, "How old you?"

I said, "Fourteen."

Then he say, "You can read?" Just like that. What the heck he mean? You know, to me, I thought that was a strange question to ask. You think that anybody who go to school can read. He say, "You can read?"

I look at him. Finally I pick up enough courage to say, "Yeah."

So he talk about something else again. Then he came back with the same question. "You sure you can read?"

At that time, well, I was little bolder, so I said, "Yes," right away. Talk, talk, talk. He ask me one more time. I say, "Yes."

So then he look at me. He say, "You know, why you come work for me? You pick pineapple?"

I said, "They tell me come with you, so I come with you."

He said, "No. You no work outside here. Too heavy job for you. I go bring you to my friend [Charles Ah Kee] this afternoon. I go tell him give you a job because you can read."

What the heck he meant by that? So after work, he took me in tow and we went to see the

building, they call the box house. That's in the old days, we don't have paper cartons. Everything was in boxes and they make the boxes there. They put the labeling, all the boxes, and all that. You know, the seller boxes, see. So-and-so brand, packed by so-and-so, with the address. You know, all that kind of junk. So I went in there. He went to the house, went there, went to the office. He went to a guy sitting at a desk. Half-Chinese, half-Hawaiian fellow. "Charlie, I bring you one good boy. He can read." What the heck he talking about? You know, just like that.

Charlie [Ah Kee] was sitting on the desk. He look over his glasses, "You sure you can read?"

I said, "Yeah." (Chuckles) It was a very quiet, "Yeah."

Then he say, "Okay. You come tomorrow morning."

So I went the next day. I see this guy smoking. And it was all Hawaiians, couple half-Hawaiians, and one Japanese boy over there. They must have a crew of about eighteen guys in there. Some making boxes, nailing it. Using the nailing machine. Some running a print shop and do all, you know, do everything in connection with the making of a box. So he [Charles Ah Kee] assigned everybody to the work to be done that day.

Then he say, "You come with me." Because all the time I was just standing there like a (chuckles) lost soul. Then he went to what they call the branding machine. That's where they set type for this, picking the boxes. When an order come in, he get a copy of the order. Say, make it 2,000 cases of Libby's fresh, sliced pineapple. Because Libby wasn't in existence [on Maui] at that time [1921]. And you know, set it according to their labels that they give. And the man that was setting type was an old Hawaiian fellow. Must be about fifty years old. Big husky Hawaiian guy. In fact they were all big and husky.

So he [Charles Ah Kee] tell me, "You watch." All the time he was by me, he say, "You watch." So I look at the fellow as he was doing the—say, like Maui. M-A-U-I. He go put *M.* He know where all the letters are. He put it, set in the machine. *A,* he put, *U,* and he just set it in. But every so often, he made a mistake because like an *M,* it could be a *W.* Poor fellow, he was so old and he knows no schooling at all. So he turn over a *W* and he make it into an *M* on the plate. I just watch. Then after he got through, Charlie, that's the foreman, he say, "You see anything wrong with that?"

Gee, I look at the Hawaiian man, I look at Charlie. And I was (chuckles) small guy standing there. And finally, I say, "Yes."

He said, "What?"

So I told, "That letter is turned upside down."

"Oh," he said, "good. Now you learn some more from him, how to set all these things."

So the whole day, I watched the man set type and all that. Every time he would make a mistake, if nobody noticed it, they'd make the box and sometimes even load the pineapples, put the pineapple in the crate, nail it up again. Until somebody notice there's a mistake. And then they got to scrape it off with a hand scraper. Oh, that was a tedious job. And these people work on contract. So they get paid by how much they produce. When they make a

mistake, they don't get paid for correcting the mistakes. So sometimes they do the whole day just scraping.

But after I went in, I was kind of careful in those days. I make sure. So they used to make lots of—their production went up. So about the week after that, these old Hawaiian people, they said, "Oh, Hew, we going to put you in our contract gang." So they know how to say thank you. But it didn't mean anything to me because I didn't know they were on contract. But after a while I found that out. So, okay. Oh, and by the way, in those days, we get paid ten cents an hour, ten hours a day.

So when they put me in there, production went up through good luck, I guess. And then I used to make good money in those days. Instead of ten cents [an hour], I make maybe fifty cents [in one hour] as part of the gang.

JS: 'Cause you folks produced more?

KH: Yeah.

JS: And this was wooden crates then, right? Wood boxes?

KH: Yeah, regular wood boxes. And just lots of labor. Because everything was done by hand, except the machine that sets the type, the print. Of course there's a box that makes the machine [KH means, a nailing machine is used to make the boxes]. You know, they get like this. They take the bottom, they take one of the sides. They punch a bunch of holes, nails, in there. They turn around and punch holes. And go right around. If they make a mistake, why, they got (chuckles) to suffer the consequences.

JS: So how long were you doing that kind of job?

KH: Oh, I was doing that for four or five years.

JS: But that was only during the summer?

KH: Yeah. Then every year after I leave, they say, "Oh, you coming back next year?"

So I say, "Yeah."

Until after a while, when these fiber cartons start to come in.

JS: The what?

KH: Fiber boxes start to come in. And then work kind of slack. So I went to Libby, McNeill [& Libby]. They opened up couple years before that. Because the supervisor was a good friend of mine from Pā'ia days. So I went to see him. He say, "Yeah. Come work over here." So I went.

JS: So the box job that you had was with . . .

KH: Ha'ikū Fruit.

JS: Ha'ikū Fruit. So how did you feel about working, you know, making the boxes as opposed to picking the pineapple?

KH: Oh, was so much easier. And then when we don't have work, our boss has to give us, practically speaking, a whole day's work [pay] for just fooling around or making pineapple crates on an *ukupau* basis. So when we make on an *ukupau* basis, we get through about nine o'clock [in the morning] and we go home. So that was good (chuckles).

JS: On what kind of basis?

KH: You know these pineapple crates? Yeah, they're made out of laths with the holes in between, I mean, the slits. We used to make only eight or nine a day. So the boss, ah, he said, "You better make—" I don't know how much, he say, "on contract on *ukupau.*" So when he said that, the rest of the boys, we're working together . . .

JS: What did you say? What is that?

KH: *Ukupau.* You ever heard the expression? It's in Hawaiian. For working . . .

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

KH: You don't know the word *ukupau* before?

JS: No, now I know what you're saying. (JS chuckles.)

KH: *Ukupau,* well, a good example, the garbagemen. They have a certain route to go. As soon as they finish the route, they can go. Well, that's the same idea. We just make so much work and then we off. We get paid for the whole day. Oh, that's a good Hawaiian word (JS chuckles), *ukupau.*

JS: Okay. So after that you went to work at Libby, McNeill.

KH: Yeah, for maybe a couple of summers.

JS: What did you do over there?

KH: Oh, I was kind of a little straw boss. (Laughs) Because the paper cartons came into effect then. I was supposed to watch out to see that every carton was stacked in the right place. You get lots of places with all different kind of pineapples. Like fancy sliced, standard sliced, crush, fancy crush, and tidbits. They all line up. And when order come in, say, for fancy slice, they supposed to take just the pineapples from the fancy slice section and run it through the labeling machine and pack 'em up. So it was a good job. Just stand around, watching them work.

JS: So was the pay any different?

KH: Yeah. The pay was 15, 17-1/2 cents an hour in those days? I really don't know. It was so long. But I know I had a little more than the rest of the boys that worked during the summer.

JS: So most of the supervisors like you, what kind of nationality were they?

KH: In Ha'ikū [KH means Libby, McNeill & Libby] at that time we had, the superintendent was a Portuguese man, a good friend of mine. That's why I got in.

JS: At Libby?

KH: Yeah (chuckles). There was a half-Hawaiian man. Then, say a few Portuguese and a couple of Japanese boys.

JS: So all mix?

KH: Yeah, all mixed.

JS: And then the people who were working, what kind of people were they?

KH: Ah, all kinds. We have Portuguese people, Hawaiian people, Japanese people, a few Chinese because the Chinese population is small. But it's the only time when the kids can make money, during the summer. So, yeah. We have all kinds.

JS: So what were your brothers and sisters doing?

KH: Oh, my sisters, they work in the cannery, too. What they call, packing pineapples, put in the cans.

JS: Okay, so you worked at Libby's for a few summers?

KH: Two or three years.

JS: And then that's when you were still going to school on Maui?

KH: No, I was going to the university already. I think the first year or so. Then after that when Maui Pine came into existence, I went to work for them.

JS: So when you went to UH then, how did your family manage to send you over there?

KH: I was working part-time at my uncle's [Fook Sang] store on South King Street [in Honolulu]. You know where the Okumura Home [also known as the Japanese Christian Boarding School] used to be on South King, not too far away from McKinley High School? From McKinley High School, you come up two, three blocks, and there was a home for the Japanese kids, you know, boys that went to Honolulu from the outside islands for schooling. There was a little store right across from there.

JS: So what kind of store was it?

KH: Oh, small little grocery store, pop-and-mom store.

JS: So where were you living in Honolulu?

KH: Living? Oh, with them [KH's uncle].

JS: And then how would you go to school?

KH: We used to catch the streetcar from Beretania Street. We walked one, two blocks. We go through the Japanese[-language] school there. What they call that? I think Makiki Japanese[-language] School, I think. I don't know if that's the correct name for it. We used to walk across, catch the streetcar over there, and go. But sometimes when we get out early, we just walk from school and walk back. Because the streetcar used to run way up to Mānoa where the stop is and then we got to walk back to the school. So we figure that, few Japanese boys and myself figure, oh, by the time the streetcar get there and we get home, well, we'll be home anyhow. So we used to walk back.

JS: So you said it was actually your mother who said you were going to go to university. So what did you think about that? What did you think about going to school some more?

KH: Well, actually, I don't think I think about it. (Chuckles) You know, in those days, why, all I know is I was just wondering where I was going to work after the cannery season is over. Because I remember that when the principal told me if I was going to school some more, I said, "No. I got to go to work." So he didn't say anything more. And then when my mother said I can go to school, I went to see him right away.

He said, "Okay, I fix everything up for you," or words to that effect. And I think the very next day he called me up or went to see my mother to tell, "Oh, yeah. He going school. Everything all fixed up."

JS: So how did you get over to Honolulu?

KH: Oh, that's a long story. You know, we used to have these interisland ships. No planes in those days. We used to come down to Kahului because I was up Pā'ia then. We used to get a taxi. We go to Kahului, down the harbor, we wait over there for the boat to sail around eight, nine o'clock [at night]. And then we reach Honolulu early in the morning at six o'clock, dock at the pier. And then at first, the first time I went down, my uncle pick us up. He had an old Model T [car]. Pick up and home. Then after a while, when I got kind of used to the place, I used to sometimes catch a streetcar, then I go up to his place.

JS: So what did you think about Honolulu?

KH: Well, you know, I don't think much of it. That's why I never live in Honolulu. I mean, I had an opportunity to go down there. I had jobs offered to me, but I guess I'm kinda lazy guy, you know, want to take things easy without rushing, do this and do that.

Yeah, I remember, in the old days—where are you living?

JS: Kāne'ohe.

KH: Kāne'ohe. Well, you know, Kāne'ohe used to be all fish ponds before. My uncle, before I graduate, he took me to different places. He told me, "Buy this, buy that."

First thing I say, "Uncle, I no more money."

And that's true. Finally, one day, he took me down to—you know where the Sheridan, that Dairymen's [Association, now called Meadow Gold Dairies], plant at Sheridan Street? Right down where the what you call used to be. Where American [Savings] Bank is, you go down

two blocks away. That place, just where you look out from the front steps, you see all rice field [then]. All buildings now. That I remember. My uncle took me there. "Kui Seu, more better you buy this place."

"Uncle, I'm not going be farmer. I not going plant rice." (Chuckles) No foresight.

He said, "No. *Bumbai* this place good. They going take all the water away and make nice houses over here."

"Nah, I no think so, Uncle." Don't know enough in those days. Sure enough, you look at that place now, you get—what that hotels over there, especially the. . . . What that Japanese hotel? I getting old. I don't remember. [KH is referring to the Pagoda Hotel and Terrace.] You know, all those places, get beautiful places. But in those days, it was just a rice field with one lone buffalo in a big water (chuckles) pond.

(Laughter)

JS: So how did your family afford to send you to the university?

KH: Well, struggle.

JS: So your parents paid or did you pay for the tuition?

KH: Well, I guess you might call it a joint effort, yeah? Because that's why, as soon as I can, I come back to work. In those days tuition was kind of cheap anyhow.

JS: So what kinds of things did you study at the university?

KH: General business. General, what they call, leading to a bachelor of arts degree. It's not what it is now. Before, there're not too many courses like now.

JS: So did you know what you wanted to study?

KH: Well, there was only thing I know. Business is the only field that was open to us outside of being an engineer. In fact I never can see myself as an engineer because as I say, I'm too lazy with figures.

JS: So what did you think about going to the university after going to school on Maui?

KH: Oh, it's just another learning process. It's just learn a little more about how things are being run.

JS: What about the people that you met?

KH: Oh, well, actually even though I know quite a few of them, like anything else, all of us practically speaking had a small group of friends that you go to school with, get together with, doing things with. And all the rest of it, why, they just somebody else.

JS: So those friends, you met there or were they people from Maui?

KH: They all from outside islands or from Honolulu itself, Kāne'ohe, Honolulu. That's why like the few Japanese boys that were staying at the Okumura Home, that we were going to Maui High at that time and we went up there [to UH]. But outside of that, all. . . .

JS: So you knew some people from Maui who were there with you?

KH: Yeah. And as I say, they lived right across at the Okumura Home. So it was good, easy for me.

JS: And what kind of work were you doing at your uncle's store?

KH: Oh, help. You know, when you say work, you do anything. You sweep the floor. Some, the customer come in, want to buy can of beans, you sell him a can of beans. (Chuckles) He wants a bottle of soda water, you get him a bottle of soda water. Real pop-and-mom store.

JS: So what kind of area? Were there other stores around there, too?

KH: Yeah. Two blocks away up the—I wonder if that store is still there? There was one store they call K. T. Kwai grocer. Right across from the big banyan tree at the corner of [South] King [Street] and what street went back of that? Ke'eaumoku? By that junction? Let's see, [South] Beretania [Street], then you come to Young Street, then King, yeah? That's the street.

JS: So how long were you at UH?

KH: Four years.

JS: And then you graduated . . .

KH: Nineteen twenty-nine. Depression year.

JS: So what were you thinking of doing once you graduated?

KH: Well, at first we look for a job. And there was no job to be had. Go to places, they say, "You have," what, "overachieve. You get too much schooling. We cannot afford to pay you." And you know, in those days engineer get at the sugar plantation—one of my friends—seventy-five dollars a month to start. And he was a smart boy. After a while, he graduate, he said, "I'm going the place for an interview, I get a job over there."

So I say, "Good for you."

So he went. Then he came back, he tell me, "You know how much they going pay me?" Well, I thought was at least $150 or something like that in those days. He say, "Seventy-five dollars, one month." He say, "I don't think I going take it. I don't have to go to school to get. . . . " (chuckles) you know.

Yeah, they were the real depression days. Finally I got a job in Moloka'i as an assistant bookkeeper.

JS: How did you find that job?

KH: Through an accounting firm. This fellow, Theodore Char, he was the first CPA [certified public accountant], Oriental CPA, in Hawai'i. And he was checking the books of one of the stores up there. So he tell me, "You want a job?" He said, "But that's a lonely place."

I said, "I take anything." So I stayed there for a year.

JS: How did you know him?

KH: Ted Char?

JS: Yeah.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

KH: How did I know him to start with? Gee, I don't even remember. Actually I didn't know him too well, but maybe I went to his office. After a while, I became good friends with the family. But I kind of forget how I met him.

JS: So he was the one who told you about this job there?

KH: Yeah. So I stayed there for a year. Good learning experience.

JS: So what store was this?

KH: Y. K. Yuen store.

JS: And what kind of store is that?

KH: General store, merchandise store. It's like a plantation store. They sell everything for the laborers. And laborers, these people used to charge. In those days nobody has money. But like you, for example, want to buy a pound of salmon. You go to the store, you charge it. And then at the end of the month when you get paid, they had a deduction program where we would send them, the plantation, that you bought so much stuff for the month. And we just put it on. And then before you get your money, why, they deduct the amount for us (chuckles).

JS: So was that part of your job, too, then? To make sure. . . .

KH: Well, yeah. Because in those days you don't do just one thing. I mean, [now], if you're a clerk, you doing certain job, that's all you do. You take the accounts payable, you just do accounts payable. Or if they say you're an accounts receivables clerk, you just do accounts receivable. But in those days you do everything. If a customer come in for something, you gotta get it for him. If it's not in the store, you do a little ordering, a little buying. Everything that has to be done. Only thing I didn't learn how to do in the store was to cut meat. (Chuckles) Outside of that, I did everything. I learned everything, which was good experience.

JS: So what did you think about Moloka'i, the community, where you were?

KH: Well, the people are nice, Moloka'i. I met some of the nicest people there. But it's dusty. I

always remember when we used to run short of water. You see, we get our water from I don't know where. And every so often—it's a plantation line. When they decided to conserve water, they turn the faucet off without letting you know. We open the store from eight [A.M.] to eight [P.M.]. And we have time off, what they call siesta time. We have lunch, and after lunch we take two hours off. At that time we always trying to take a bath or shower before the common laborers come home and take all the water. But sometimes the plantation guys or whoever, I don't know who, they would just turn off the faucet without letting you know. And you'll be all soapy and everything and then all at once no water coming down. (Chuckles) Unbelievable.

JS: So where were you living over there?

KH: In the clubhouse, a building they call the clubhouse, where quite a few single boys live.

JS: Was that with the plantation workers over there?

KH: Yeah, the Libby, McNeill [& Libby], the workers, plantation workers.

JS: So what plantation was this for?

KH: Libby, McNeill.

JS: And that was pineapple?

KH: Yeah, pineapple. The pineapple industry was very strong at that time in the 1930s. They were opening up pineapple fields all over the place. And practically the whole island was in pineapple.

JS: Were you doing any kind of bookkeeping when you were at your uncle's store?

KH: No.

JS: So this was the first time?

KH: Yeah, mm hmm.

JS: And how did you feel about working on Moloka'i?

KH: Well, it was just a job as far as I was concerned. Of course I thought, "Oh, I better go look for another job. There's too much dust over here."

JS: So when did you decide to leave Moloka'i?

KH: About a year after I worked there.

JS: And what did you decide to do?

KH: I came back to Maui, stayed home for a couple of months. Then I got a job with the auto division of Maui Dry Goods and Grocery Company, Limited.

JS: And what were you doing?

KH: Keeping the books there. Keeping the books, collect-the-sales man, parts boy, and I don't know what else. Everything, yeah.

JS: So how did you get the job over there?

KH: Well, it happens that the bookkeeper wanted to go on his own. He wanted to open a furniture store. So they were looking for a guy to, you know. So somebody there tell, "That guy's not working. Put him to work." Then he came, tell me, "Go down there, get a job. There's a job opening." So, okay.

Old Portuguese people. A Portuguese man was the manager there. He asked me a few questions. He said, "You start work tomorrow." So, okay. And in those days I didn't even have a car. I have to look around to get a ride from the country, from Pā'ia to Wailuku every day.

JS: So you were still living with your parents?

KH: Parents, yeah.

JS: And how was business during this time?

KH: Well, it's a whole lot different than from now, I guess. At that time if we sell, I think we would average about maybe four, five cars a month at our place.

JS: And that was to fix cars?

KH: Four or five cars a month.

JS: To fix or to sell?

KH: Sell. New cars. Then of course the garage, they always kept busy because the cars in those days, well, they're not built as well as now (chuckles). In the old days all you need is a screwdriver and a monkey wrench to fix a car because everything is—not like now, where you have got special electronic equipment for test this and test that. Before, a mechanic would take the car apart and he just put it back together again.

JS: So how long would you work every day?

KH: You mean, the hours? Regular forty-hour week. Because there's not enough work in the office, I used to go out and collect in the camps. The old days, doing business is not what it is like now. In the old days, say a person wants to buy a refrigerator—we sell appliances, too—he come down. He say, "I want to buy a so-and-so." Okay. And usually, they run around ten, fifteen dollars a month. I mean, down payment and the balance on those was ten, fifteen dollars a month plus interest. And I used to go and collect. Oh, from here to Hāna. Couple of times I even went to Lahaina to collect. But that's how the business was being done in the old days. Now, you go to, say you want to buy a appliance or a car, they say okay. They tell you go to the bank, get the money from the bank, and then you pay the bank every month. In those days, no, we just sell them the [goods], you know.

JS: So did the Maui Dry Goods, did they have the same kind of system like on Moloka'i where people could. . . .

KH: Well, it's a different kind of business. Moloka'i, too, everything is done on credit. Well, actually, in the old days, everything was done on credit. Even the big stores in Honolulu, you go to, say, well, maybe Henry May and Company, [Limited]. You have credit there. You go, you buy your groceries or whatever, and then they expect you to—at the end of the month they send you a bill and you pay 'em. It's not like now. You go to a supermarket, if you don't have the money to pay for it, "Oh, so sorry (chuckles), Missus, you got to get the money to pay for it." Or either that, you say you get an account with the bank. And now even the banks they establish little machines. You can check with the bank if you get the money, then they take that money from your account before they give you the groceries (chuckles). Business altogether different now. Yeah, everything was done on credit.

JS: Okay. Let me change tape.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 22-102-1-93; SIDE ONE

JS: This is a continuation of an interview with Mr. Kui Seu Hew.

Okay, we're talking about your job at Maui Dry Goods.

KH: Yeah.

JS: Were you working anyplace else during that time?

KH: No.

JS: So how long did you work at . . .

KH: I worked there till the war started. Yeah, in 1942, yeah? At the end of the year, year end, 1941. And they told me I was supposed to work for the [U.S.] Engineer [Department]. And I told them I didn't want to go because although I know the people there, I think I didn't care to work for the government, to be honest with you (chuckles). But they said, "No." They said, "You got to go because you're drafted," or the like. During those days, they just grab you. They tell, "You go there work," under the manpower act. [Due to manpower shortages, the government imposed controls to channel workers into jobs important in the war effort.] So I went up there to work as an accountant-clerk.

JS: Before you went there, had you worked [in Kahului] at the Ah Fook market [then known as the T. Ah Fook general store, now Ah Fook's Super Market]?

KH: Yeah. But just in the evenings partially.

JS: That was before the war started then?

KH: Yeah, before the war start.

JS: So when you were at Ah Fook then, when had you started working there?

KH: Full-time?

JS: No, that part-time.

KH: Part-time? Maybe '39, '40.

JS: And what kind of work were you . . .

KH: Oh, just helping in the books, you know.

JS: How was that market different from working in Maui Dry Goods?

KH: Well, that totally different. One is a grocery store and one is an automobile concern. So in the old days, as I said, everything was on a charge basis. They did quite a business with the—what shall I say—just like the upper class of people, you know. Those people. Not common laborers, though they had some. But mostly with the supervisors and the people that have responsible jobs.

So what the boys used to do is—or sometimes they call, telephone them, if they want certain groceries. Say, one day, maybe in Pu'unēnē, they call the Pu'unēnē people down there, come. They call up and say, "This is Ah Fook's. You want anything today?" So they write it down, you know. Then after they pick the orders and then they deliver it. That's how business was done in the old days, not like now, yeah? (Chuckles) You can't do that anymore.

JS: So how did you get that job over there?

KH: Ah Fook?

JS: Mm hmm.

KH: Well, my wife-to-be [Gladys Fong Hew] was working there. So I, you know, after work when sometimes I'm at loose ends, nothing to do, just go there, fool around. And I know the proprietor from—oh, well he knew me, rather, from my Pā'ia days. Because he used to run a boardinghouse for most of the *Haole* kids. They call his place the Pā'ia Club House. My father used to have a few of them that was not living in the clubhouse. They were living outside and those are the ones that go to my father's place to eat. But Mr. [Tam] Ah Fook, he ran the clubhouse for the single boys. And I always used to go to his place because during World War I he used to keep lots of rabbits for food, you know, for their protein. And I used to go and watch 'em and look at them (chuckles). You know, you young kid, go look, ey, see them jumping around (chuckles). Yeah, so. . . .

JS: So how did you like working at Ah Fook as opposed to some of the other places that you worked at?

KH: You know, that's one thing. All my jobs, I never did think how much I like it. It's a job, you

know, come to think of it. It's not like now, where. . . . Like those kids in the store, you hire them as courtesy clerks, the first thing you know, they disappeared. They don't come back no more. Sometimes even the different departments, different people for certain job. And if they don't like it, they just quit. Whereas, I guess I was brought up in the old school when times were hard and we lucky to have a job. And if we had a job, why, we just think we got to stick to it. But I think that's why in the old days, well, we lucky to have jobs.

I remember one time, a man came to me and tell me, "Oh, you can give my son a job?"

"Oh," I said, "there's no opening now." I said, "Why don't you tell him come down, file an application, and if we have an opening we'll call him." Because he was a good friend of mine.

He said, "No." He said, "I want him to work right away."

I said, "Well, you know, kind of hard. Because there's nothing for him to do."

Then he said, "You know, I like my son to work to keep him out of mischief." He said, "Why don't you put him to work and you pay him whatever you can and then I pay you back. Just to see that he work."

I said, "You know, that's too complicated for me. *Bumbai,* somebody come and examine the books and they wonder what the heck is going on." So I had to explain to him why I couldn't do it. But that's how it was before. It's not like now, a kid come there, work. And then he decide he didn't like to work or something not to his liking, he just walk off. Knowing that he just walk off and there's a job anyplace waiting for him. That was before this coming depression, of course. Because now people start to tighten up, now. Yeah, but for a time, that's how it was.

In fact, one time—and you'd be surprised—a kid came in, nicely dressed. So I looked at him and he talks nice and everything. I tell, "Yeah." I said, "Sure." I tell, "You can come work. But you got to. . . . " I was going to him, "You can do this and that."

But instead of that, he had this little paper. "I want to work certain hours, certain days. I want to get paid so much."

I look at that. "Son, I'm afraid you came to the wrong place." (Chuckles) But you know, without telling him what he gets and all that, oh, he had it all written down. He wants so much pay, certain hours. And one of the things was, he said he didn't have to work on Saturdays and Sundays. Oh, that's the days we need the school kids. (Chuckles) But, you know, that's how it goes.

JS: And this was before the war started or. . . .

KH: Oh, this was after the war. Before the war, there was no such thing. Everybody was lucky to get a job.

JS: So when you were keeping the books at Ah Fook, that was at night right after your other job?

KH: Yeah, well, till after. . . . Well, let's go back a little bit. After I worked for the engineers for

a while, Naval Air Station, Pu'unēnē, wants somebody to run the ship service department and keep the books for them.

JS: Well, let's go back a little bit more to when you were working for the engineers. They wanted you to do that before or after the war had—on December 7?

KH: After the war had started.

JS: Oh, okay. So . . .

KH: They had wanted me to go to work for them before, but I told them I didn't want to work for the army. (Chuckles)

JS: Okay. So on December 7, [1941], then, when, you know . . .

KH: The war started.

JS: What do you remember from that day? How did you hear about what was happening?

KH: In what way?

JS: Well, where were you when you heard that war started?

KH: I was at home, Sunday. I was just coming—we lived in Pā'ia at that time on a two-story building. So downstairs was the dining room. Just sat down to eat. And my oldest brother, he was still listening to the radio upstairs, the old-fashioned kind. Then he came down, he yell, "Oh, the Japanese bombed Honolulu, Pearl Harbor."

"Oh, what's that?" I tell, you know. I tell him, "Must be kidding or what?"

He said, "Come and listen." So I went upstairs. The radio was on. And the guy was trying to describe Honolulu, all the excitement there was. People rushing here and there. Every so often he would repeat. He said, "This is not a practice drill," or something, I forgot. What he meant was, it's for real.

Actually, we never think much of it because it never hit us yet. In any way, it never hit us. We only hear the news, that's all. And Honolulu seemed so far away. It was only when the rationing start to come in that we start to feel it. And then, of course, the manpower act came into effect. You can't move around to work [change jobs] or anything. Everything got to go through the [War] Manpower Commission or whatever. And then, of course, gasoline was kind of hard to get.

JS: So on December 7 then, once you folks heard the news on the radio, what did you folks do?

KH: Nothing. Only gather around. You know, lot of people gathered in their little knots and talk, and see if it's something strange, you know. They say, "Oh, yeah, what's going to happen now?" Oh, we didn't even pay attention. Somebody would say, "Oh, well, pretty soon they going bomb Maui, too. The Japanese people going take over." And then, after a while, there were so many rumors going around like crazy. We hear people, the Japanese troops landed at so-and-so place and all that. You know, all kinds of story. And every time something happen

and somebody—well, example, the crusher sometimes makes a big noise. Everybody think somebody bomb someplace, that's why there's noise. (Chuckles) It was crazy.

But then I went to work for the engineers. And I thought had real good pay. Two hundred fifty dollars, one month. (Chuckles) Then all at once---most of the Japanese people are carpenters, so they want carpenters to build army barracks all over the place. So they put in the call for carpenters to show up. And we had a fellow by the name of Hardy, Hollis Hardy, a good friend of mine. He come and say, "Oh, Nakamura, you carpenter, eh? Okay. You bring your hammer and saw tomorrow. You go work carpenter." (Chuckles) Just like that. There was no screening or anything. Everybody got to go work quick to put up these portable buildings and do this and do that. Build roads. All that kind.

JS: So at first, though, were you supposed to stay at your job then at Maui Dry Goods?

KH: Yeah, well, I never did think of quitting until they came down. I guess somebody talked to the boss, because I was away. Only thing is, when I walk in the next day, oh, he say, "You going out to the engineers' office to work." He said, "Jack is up there, too." That's his son.

I said, "No, I don't want to go work."

But he said, "You know, we got manpower act. No way, you got to go."

So I said, "Oh, well." So I went up. And they put me to work right away.

JS: But that was as a civilian you went to work there, right?

KH: Yeah, I was working as a civilian.

JS: So where was it that you had to go work? Where was that place?

KH: You know where the county building is now? Right in Wailuku. There was an old building there. But that was the location, exact location.

JS: And what kind of work were you doing?

KH: Accounting.

JS: So what did you have to do?

KH: Well, all the people that go out to work for the engineers, actually, they're not working for the engineers. They working for a contracting firm. And the engineers will reimburse this contracting firm according to their payroll and all that. But we kept the payroll for them and all that. We figure out the hours and what job it was. It's a job, say, H-1 or HU-2 or CAP-1. They have all kind of designations for different jobs. We were trying to keep it exactly what it was.

JS: So were there a lot of people like you who were made to work for them?

KH: Well, in the office, which includes the procurement department, I would say about fifty, sixty people. Then all the rest, outside men. Out in the field, people.

JS: So the people in the office, what kind of nationality were they?

KH: The engineers at that time were comprised of mostly *Haole*s and some Hawaiian people. They all used to work for the county, these Hawaiian people, as engineers and all that. They just switch 'em over. And then the clerks, Japanese people mostly. Few Chinese boys. And few Portuguese people. So it was general mixture of people. There was no particular. . . . They don't say, "Oh, we have so much quota to fill from the Japanese population, so we put that in," like nowadays. In those days, well, anybody, they know somebody that can do a certain work, put 'em to work.

JS: What about the Japanese people though? Were they . . .

KH: Oh, they got to work. Because, in fact, most of the carpenters, practically all the carpenters, were Japanese people. In our office, we had quite a few Japanese boys. And they had responsible jobs, too. As far as we're concerned, there was no discrimination of any kind until I went to work for the Naval Air [Station], Pu'unēnē. That's when they had discrimination. Well, at that time the war was getting worse.

JS: So you were working for the engineers in the beginning part of the war?

KH: Yeah.

JS: So what about, how did the war affect you in terms of your being at home? You know, with all the new restrictions that they had, things like that. How did you folks manage at home?

KH: Well, we managed somehow, but I know all the thing is, I come home at night. You know, the first thing we had to do, we had to tape or black out all the rooms. Not a single—they make sure—single bit of light went out. We had a marine camp right above the hill. And one time, I forgot to close a window and the light came through. They came right down. They says, "Your window is open."

I said, "Oh?" So I said, "Oh, yeah, I close 'em."

But I used to come home late at night. And in those days, well, sometimes we have to work nights. You know, kind of stand. . . . What is that word I supposed to use? Almost like, just kind of stand by, waiting for something to happen. Like during the Midway attack [June 4–6, 1942]. We knew about the attack, you know, the battle-to-be was going to happen. Two or three days beforehand we knew it already. We were all excited. So it was our duty at nights to stay there, some of us work in shifts. Just to stand by so in case something should happen, the United States should lose the battle, the Battle of Midway, well, we were supposed to start evacuating people to 'Īao Valley. All those things, you know, we used to have almost knowledge before it happened.

JS: So you knew that, because you working with the engineers?

KH: Yeah, right in the engineers. We had to—almost like getting prepared for something that might happen. We were in the forefront of things, in other words.

Yeah, I remember at that time, the Battle of Midway, well, we're not supposed to talk about those things during the war. Everything was hush-hush. So I went from the engineers' office,

I went to pick the—I got married already [in February 1942]—tell the wife, "Oh, let's go home quick." And she wanted to finish her work. And I said, "No, we go right now." And I couldn't say why, you know. So she got kind of peeved and I got kind of peeved because (chuckles) no communication. I cannot tell her, "Oh, we might have trouble. We might have to evacuate," or something. All we know was, we were supposed to get everybody off the streets, just in case. Luckily it didn't happen, but (chuckles).

JS: So I guess working with the engineers then, you folks heard a lot more than the regular . . .

KH: Well, we know—oh, yes. And we know things that might happen. Because as I said, we're just like at the forefront in case something should happen. Certain things should be done and we're supposed to get the people, you know . . .

JS: So did they have like a list of things that you folks had to know to do?

KH: No. We just stand by. We just knew if something happened. But we always can figure out, oh, that they expect something. And then after that, somebody would say, oh, that was because—like the Battle of Midway, we didn't know what it was, but we know there was going be a big battle going on somewheres in the islands. But we don't know exactly where. We just stand by in case the United States should lose. And at that time they didn't expect the United States to win that battle.

JS: So you didn't know where it was, but you knew there was something.

KH: Yeah. Something was going to happen—[we knew] that two or three days ahead of time in those days. So we just stood by waiting for something to happen.

And then, I got to tell you this. I used to work late at nights. Well, everybody, too. We painted our headlights and our rear lights with a dark color, black or something. And they leave a small little opening about maybe one-inch round. And we supposed to come with no lights. Come down, that pitch-dark. And sometimes I had the hardest time finding my way home. I couldn't see the road because the lights were so small, about an inch in diameter. Oh.

JS: And so where were you living then at that . . .

KH: Over here [in Wailuku].

JS: At this house?

KH: I finished building the house February 1942. I mean, they just put it so I can live in. And I was supposed to have little fancy gadgets here and there. But they stopped that because, ah, they say, "That's enough for you." That was one of the conditions I went to work for the engineers. They finish the house for me. Because it was practically finished. So they said, "Oh, we give you enough material to finish the house, but all that fancy stuff, you got to wait till after the war." Well, I figure, well, that's better than nothing, eh? (Chuckles)

JS: So the engineers built . . .

KH: No, my regular contractor. He finished it. They gave him enough material.

JS: And then you got married after that?

KH: Yeah, just after that. Because I remember the last load of the materials was on their base yard. That morning they were supposed to bring it up. And some engineer went down to the lumberyard. They said, "Oh, you can't take that out."

They said, "Oh, the man paid for the lumber already."

He said, "That doesn't make any difference. There's a war going on." (Chuckles)

So I got kind of peeved. I tell the chief clerk that. "Ah," he said, "well, we fix it up so you can live in it anyhow."

Oh, so practically got completed. You know, [without] the fancy work, huh?

JS: So before that, though, when the war had first started, you were still living with your parents, right?

KH: Yeah.

JS: In Pā'ia?

KH: Yeah.

JS: So what about things like air raid shelters?

KH: Oh, people tried to build air raid shelters all over the place. Lots of people would dig little trench, any kind of hole in the backyard or something, try to cover it up with whatever lumber they can get. And all the shovels and whatnot are made of wood. The shovel, you get steel, huh, with the wooden handle. They build the thing all of wood. Everything has to be kind of make-do. And then things start to get short after a while because no boats were coming in. I mean, no ships for the civilians.

JS: So did your family build an air raid shelter?

KH: No. Because my brother got sick at that time. I was with the engineers and I work late in those days. And then we cannot do much traveling back and forth. But practically anybody that could or had the time, had made a shelter.

JS: What about once you moved to this house?

KH: Over here?

JS: Yeah.

KH: No, it's just like that. We were thinking of putting a community shelter somewheres down here, but everybody say, "Yeah, let's do it." But nobody seems to start and nobody seems to have the time. So we just left it alone. In Honolulu there might have been more shelters, comparatively speaking, per capita. But not on Maui.

JS: Were there any other kind of incidents that happened because of all these restrictions and things?

KH: Well, I know that food was hard to get. And it used to come in driblets. Like for example, bacon. Down the store, you know, I forgot how much cases of bacon we use a week. But it just was there was none to be had at any price. And when we get our quota, I remember, it'd be one carton at a time and then I think there was twenty-five, thirty packets, you know. So what the store did was to ration it off. They go down the list of all the charge accounts because they know who deals there. As I said, in those days, everybody was on a charge basis. They go right through the [list alphabetically], *A, B, C, D,* and if they run out, they stop right there. So they get their share of bacon. And then when the next shipment come in, about one, two weeks, a month later, they go down from where they left off and they go right back, keep on going.

And people used to get mad. They say, "How come so-and-so get and I no get?"

Even laborers, they want to—people talk. "Oh, I got my share of bacon."

So this neighbor say, "Why didn't I get mine?" So they come down and (chuckles) make noise. So we had the hardest time trying to explain to them. Well, some of them wouldn't listen. In fact we lost a couple of customers because they think we were playing favoritism.

JS: This is at Ah Fook?

KH: Yeah, at Ah Fook's, that's up. . . .

JS: So you were still working at Ah Fook's even during . . .

KH: Yeah, in the evenings I used to go down. Because the wife was still working then. And I listen to their stories that people tell, that they talk. Ho, they say, "Mrs. so-and-so come in. She was, oh, so mad at us." Then they tell (chuckles).

JS: So because you working there, did you get anything extra?

KH: No, nothing. In fact maybe we were—what you call?—we lose out maybe. We seem to be the last guys that get anything. Of course, in those old days we hardly eat bacon anyhow. We usually eat fresh stuff. Fresh meat, fresh pork, and. . . . Soon after the war when people start, you know, then we have to—everybody working, the husband and wife working—that they have to buy lots of canned goods and all that. In the old days when the lady of the house stay home and cook, why, they. . . . Not those days. Things are different from now.

JS: So at Ah Fook's, how did the store manage with customers? Did they just have to keep taking their old customers? Or were they taking new customers?

KH: No, no new customers. Because every store had its own customers. And say, you, you go shopping. Let's say, the old Pu'unēnē Store. There's a store there. You just get your stuff from Pu'unēnē Store. You go to any other store, you can't get anything. It's not like now, you can go from store to store. If one store, you go walk one store and you don't like the meat, you walk out to another store, you know, until you find what you want.

But in those days during the war years, if you want to buy meat, you just go down there when you hear there's meat. It's sort of like rationing bacon. You get in your order for so many pieces, for so many pounds of meat. They never used to say that you're going get steak, or hamburger, or what. The butcher will go there, bingo, your ticket. And for those customers that come in, every butcher shop we go, they cut there. You go there and you want to buy a piece of meat. You say, oh, you want dollar piece. And then he just cut, you know, where he was cutting. And if you don't like that cut, you say, "I don't want this piece, I want the other piece."

The butcher will say, "Next." (Chuckles) Just independent, you know. But everybody was fighting for meat.

And then they used to sell liquor. They get some. We didn't sell liquor [at Ah Fook's store]. The Toda Drug [Company] and all that, they have their allocation, liquor. And in those days everybody was supposed to get maybe a pint [quart] when the liquor come in. And that was putrid stuff. I forgot what they call 'em, Coral Sea or [Five Islands gin or] anything. You go there, you go and show your permit. Then they take your permit for that and they give you a bottle. And that's all you can get. Even guys that don't drink, they go and buy to give to their friends or to the servicemen. (Chuckles)

JS: You were saying, some of the supplies, there were shortages because the boats weren't . . .

KH: They weren't running at all. Well, there are a few running, but nothing to brag about. And always short. So everything was on ration.

JS: What about other kinds of communication between the islands? Like do you know how those things were working?

KH: No. Because everything went through the military in those days. All the telephone lines.

JS: What about news about the war and how things were going on O'ahu or other places? Did Maui get a lot of news?

KH: We don't hear too much about it actually. Not like now, you know, where if something happens, say, in Washington today, you hear it right in the afternoon, maybe a couple of hours later. But in those days, everything was tied up. So when you come down to it, still things seem to be so strange compared to before. Like I'm telling you now, I bet that you say, "Well, how could those things be?" Because it seems so primitive. Like I used to tell some of my kids at the store before, when they first started as part-timers, we used to give 'em minimum wage, three, four dollars an hour in those days.

They complain, "That's all?"

So I used to tell them, "You know, I used to work for ten cents an hour, ten hours a day."

They say, "You sucker."

(Laughter)

KH: They couldn't believe it. But as I say, in those days, a job is a job. It's not like—you cannot

chose.

JS: Okay, why don't we stop here today.

KH: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 22-108-2-93

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Kui Seu Hew (KH)

September 10, 1993

Wailuku, Maui

BY: Jonylle Sato (JS)

JS: This is an interview with Mr. Kui Seu Hew at his home in Wailuku, Maui. Today is September 10, 1993. The interviewer is Jonylle Sato.

Okay, Mr. Hew, last time we talked a little bit about your background and part of World War II and how it affected your family and the community, yeah. So I wanted to still talk some more about World War II. And you had been working with the army engineers [i.e., U.S. Engineer Department], right?

KH: I worked for the army engineers for about a year, and then I was transferred to Naval Air Station, Pu'unēnē.

JS: Okay, before we get to the naval air station though, you were also working at Ah Fook?

KH: Part-time, yeah.

JS: And that was after you worked in the daytime?

KH: Now say that again.

JS: Well, how long did you work, you know, every day? How many hours did you work with the engineers?

KH: Oh, for eight hours a day . . .

JS: And then . . .

KH: . . . forty hour a week. And once in a while we have overtime.

JS: And then how long would you work at Ah Fook?

KH: Oh, maybe half an hour, an hour or so. It all depends.

JS: Mm hmm. And you were still doing the bookkeeping over there?

KH: Well, a little of it.

JS: So what other kinds of things were you taking care of at the market?

KH: Nothing.

(Laughter)

JS: Well, how was their, you know, the market—the business—once the war had started?

KH: Well, in those days everything was done on credit. What I mean is there's no cash-and-carry like the supermarkets are now. I think at least 95 percent of all the business was done on credit. We used to make bills, send 'em out. And we used to---it is wholly different from nowadays because nowadays everything is cash-and-carry. In the old days we have the employees go out, take orders, or they [the customers] call in their orders, and then they deliver it to the homes. And everything was charged.

JS: And did the market continue that during the wartime even?

KH: Yeah. We continued that until we moved into the present-day location [at Kahului Shopping Center] in 1955. And at that time we felt that we couldn't run it as a supermarket and at the same time have everybody charge because we'd be running short of money, yeah.

JS: So during the wartime, how did---I know you mentioned last time a little bit about how the rationing affected the market. Can you talk a little bit more about how the market dealt with the rationing? Or how did it change things?

KH: Well, what we really did at the market was we put everything on, what do you call, rationing basis. And it was kind of easy for business in that day, not like now. As I say, everything was done on a charge basis and we know who exactly the customers are. And we used to ration them out, like as an example, we would have had received our case of bacon or two as our share of the. . . . So we go down the list of all our customers and give each a part. You know, they can come in packages, this. And then after we run out, we wait for the next shipment to come and then we continue on [down the list of customers] from there till we go right around the alphabet, you know.

JS: Mm hmm. And so if people were getting their supplies on credit, then did the store have enough cash for itself to run?

KH: Well, it's kind of hard but we manage.

JS: Did the military play any kind of role with the store?

KH: Well, no, not. . . . Because they received their supplies direct from through their supply ships. Though once in a while some of the officers would come in and look for certain things they cannot get themselves from the naval commissary or army.

JS: So what kind of people were the normal customers there?

KH: Well, mostly---well, practically speaking all the local people.

JS: So were they mostly Chinese or just a mix?

KH: Uh, it's a mixed affair. But mostly the upper strata of. . . . Well, what I mean, the upper strata is the supervisors, mostly supervisors, and old-timers that we know well. And we have mostly, oh, maybe close to 50 percent are Whites, yeah, the *Haoles*, you know, because they are in the top positions and they are in the position to get credit in those days.

JS: So what about some of the other planation type of workers?

KH: We have some. Some, what you call, the ones that had better jobs.

JS: And so throughout, were you working at Ah Fook part-time throughout the whole war?

KH: Yeah.

JS: What kind of changes throughout, you know, the whole course of the war did you see in the supermarket and the business?

KH: Well, there's not too many changes outside of the fact that there were less supplies in the store. Because in those days, well, practically everybody has his own little plot of ground. You know, what I talking is the laborers. I remember in those days when I go to visit in the camps, right next to each home there'll be a little garden, maybe have a row of string beans, a row of onions. And then maybe a few eggplant, you know, and then white cabbage, sweet potatoes also.

JS: So what about financially throughout the war, how did the business, the market, do?

KH: Well, we did all right. I mean, we didn't make too much money but we managed to survive like everybody else.

JS: What were some of the other businesses around the market?

KH: Kahului at that time? Well, on one side we have a hotel—Miho Hotel. I don't know if you heard of the Miho family in Honolulu—well, there they had a hotel right in [Kahului]. And then there was a barber shop, a drug store, a clothing store, and then there's a variety store on one side, and on the other side there were all restaurants, pool hall, you know, fish market.

JS: How did these businesses do throughout the war?

KH: Oh, they managed to survive, too. In those days it wasn't a question of making money. It was a question of just living through it.

JS: So did any of them go out of business?

KH: Not at that time.

JS: Okay. And you were saying the military didn't come to the store too much.

KH: Yeah, they don't, no.

JS: What about Camp Maui?

KH: Oh, Camp Maui in Ha'ikū? Well, they have---the trucks used to bring their troops down through Kahului, Wailuku, drop them off for the day. And they just walk around and then go eat at a restaurant. The restaurants made money during the war because they were so, you know, many of the people, yeah, they have to eat when they come out.

JS: How much did you associate with some of the military people? Not while you were working with the engineers and things.

KH: Hardly any. In fact, none. Frankly speaking, none.

JS: Were they a noticeable presence in the community?

KH: Oh yes. You see them all over the place.

JS: And what kind of relation did they have, especially, you know, the Camp Maui marines? What kind of relation did they have with the people in the community?

KH: Well, I don't know. They seem to get along all right. I really don't know too much about that because when they'd come out I'd be working, you know, when I was with the engineers, at the engineers' office. And after that when I'm down navy base, well, I just stayed in there. But as a whole from what I see, they well-behaved.

JS: How did the community feel about having so many military people around?

KH: To be honest, I don't think anybody thought too much about it. Because of war and we have such a big Japanese population, well you know, they kind of hold their feelings, if there's any, back. They don't want to say anything for fear that they might have said something wrong.

JS: You mean the people in the community?

KH: Yeah. They [the military] were just, well, let's say just like a necessary evil maybe (chuckles). I don't know. I don't have enough info, contact with them to. . . .

JS: So what kind of atmosphere was it with, between the Japanese and the other nationalities here?

KH: Nothing. They're just as if there was no war. The only thing is you see lots of military men around the place, but that's far as a. . . . Say you, you go along, you still have your friends. Nobody will shun you because you Japanese or, you know.

JS: Okay, now even with all these military people around, you know, seeing them every day, but how much news did the residents here—the local people here—how much news did they get

about how the war was going on?

KH: Not too many because everything was censored. And you know how they work it out? If we win a battle, why, hoorah for ourselves. If we lost one, well, it's just a small battle (laughs).

But sooner or later they found out, they would find out what happened because these servicemen made friends with the local community people, you know, some friends with different people, and then they tell the story to them. And then the local people would repeat it to their friends.

JS: Okay, and why don't we talk a little bit about when you changed your job to the Naval Air Station, [Pu'unēnē]. When did that happen?

KH: I think was February 15, 1943, when. . . . No. We went '42, yeah. Forty-three that---one year, I work one year I think at the engineers then I went to work for the Naval [Air] Station, Pu'unēnē [in 1943].

JS: So what happened that you changed jobs?

KH: Well, I thought it was better for me. I had a little difference with my boss down at the engineers' office and well, no communication I guess in those days, so. And they were after me at Pu'unēnē all the time. So I left. And in those days, why, you cannot change jobs under the manpower act, you know. Everything has to go through the manpower act, so when they came to see me, they had to see the guys that run the manpower act. They knew that Naval Air [Station], Pu'unēnē was looking for somebody that could do the work for quite a while. And when they heard that I was willing to go, they said, "Well, okay, let him go. It's better for him."

So I left the engineers on February 15, and the sixteenth I start to work for the naval air in the ship service department.

JS: So what kind of work were you doing?

KH: Well, I helped to run the ship service department and serve as the personnel manager for the civilians that work in that department.

JS: So where exactly was this naval air station located?

KH: You know where the old naval. . . . Oh, you wouldn't know, I don't think. The old naval air station was halfway between Kahului and Kīhei at the old airport. The airport was down there at that time.

JS: So this naval air station at Pu'unēnē is different from NASKA [Naval Air Station, Kahului]?

KH: Well, NASKA was built after Naval Air Pu'unēnē. In fact, after NASKA was---because they had more space there. At that time during the war, Naval Air Pu'unēnē and NASKA, too, served as a training grounds for the pilots for the war. So you see them flying in and out all the time. They come in, they train for a while. No sooner you start know them then off they go.

JS: So when was the Pu'unēnē air station, when was that built? About when?

KH: Actually, what happened was, it was our only civilian airport before the war. And when the war started, the armed forces just took it over. And from there they start to expand, put up barracks for the men, enlarged the field and all that.

JS: So how did this affect the local people who were living around that area?

KH: Well, that was the beauty of it. There's hardly any people there. It was a cane field. Part of it was cane field and part of the land was in *kiawe,* so just like the land here.

JS: So did it affect the plantations then?

KH: Well, I would imagine so because they took off their lands, cane land. And now if you go through from here to Kīhei, you see cane fields on both sides of where the station used to be.

JS: With this station getting larger and with more military people there, did that also affect the relations between the military and the local people?

KH: No, because the boys don't have too much leave. Of course they come out, you know, every so [often]. Outside of that, they keep pretty much to themselves. They don't have time to fool around anyhow.

JS: Okay, why don't we talk a little bit more about your job over there.

KH: Well, as I say, at Naval Air Pu'unēnē I was in charge of the boys, the civilian kids that worked for that particular department. My job was accounting and make a report to Pearl Harbor every month. You know, send a report down there, how much we sell and how much we buy, and how much money we were supposed to have made. The main thing was to get the report out to Pearl Harbor.

JS: So when you say things that you sell or you buy, what kind of things is that?

KH: Well, we run a---well, in other words, it's almost like a supermarket. We sell food, we sell ice cream. That's our big items. We mention sailors eat ice cream even when it's pouring, raining and hard, yeah (laughs). They getting all in a line, you know, at the window leading to the ice cream dispenser. And here be raincoats and all, and they all eating ice cream (laughs).

They sell jewelry, stationery. Everything that a guy would need. We even have a cafeteria for the civilian employees. And we have a laundry. And we used to have lots of Coke down there. In fact, during the war Coke was rationed to the civilians but armed forces had all that they want. We used to send trucks to the Coke plant early in the morning, about eight of them. Big trucks. Load them up with Coke and take it back to the base every day.

JS: What about the other supplies? Were they rationed also?

KH: In the base?

JS: Yeah.

KH: Well, they were not rationed, they were just sold as soon as they come in. But then of course, we don't get everything that we want, because of the war.

JS: So it was more like, like you said, just the store kind of place that. . . .

KH: Yeah, that's what it is. It's just a store for the convenience of the personnel. Only thing is we furnish supplies to practically all the armed forces, I mean the personnel.

JS: So not just the people at Pu'unēnē but other. . . .

KH: Other base. We used to sell supplies and we even developed pictures for the people in Camp Maui, demolition people. Oh, practically every group of people that, you know.

JS: So did you work with the military people?

KH: Oh, yeah. They used to come. They tell me sometimes what they want and I will put it down and then we get it for them.

JS: So how was your relationship with the military?

KH: Oh, was good. No trouble. I thought when I first went out there I might have [a] little trouble with them but well, I never did have any trouble with them.

JS: Well, what types of people were working with you, you know, nationalities?

KH: Ah, mostly local people. Mostly young boys, mostly from fourteen years [old], fifteen, sixteen. In those days, as I said, there's no child labor law. And because of the shortage of workers, we were going down to the fourteen years old kids. And they were all local people. Unfortunately, we couldn't hire any Japanese boys for a while until after the AJA [Americans of Japanese ancestry] was activated and then they came back. Some of them got wounded, came back, you know. Then we hired those. [KH is referring to Japanese Americans who served in the 100th Infantry Battalion or the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.]

JS: So the ones who had been in the . . .

KH: War. Yeah. They were discharged, yeah. Those were the only people we hired, which was kind of unfortunate because we could have gotten a nice pool of workers but. . . . Well, I guess it's war so (chuckles) the military was overly, what do you call, cautious. That's why I happened to get my job, because the qualified boys from the Japanese community could not get work in there.

JS: So what kind of relationship, or was there any kind of friction between the military and the Japanese locals?

KH: No. Nothing.

JS: So only for jobs then.

KH: Yeah. As far as---there was no real sort of any, what do you call, bad relationship between, because well, everybody seems to be on its good behavior here (laughs).

JS: What about plantation workers? Did any of them try to get jobs at the air station?

KH: Yeah, those that the plantation have no need for, they were released and the naval [station] will pick them up. But not too many of those. It was mostly the independents. What I mean by independents are the farmers, the small ranchers, that kind of people. Cowboys. So we had most of the employees from the country and the independent people who have their own homes and are not working for the plantation, because those were the only jobs available. And they had to keep the plantation going, so we didn't have too many plantation employees except those that are retired or just about to be retired. They're kind of old, they cannot work already. Then they go down there and work because it's easier for them. I mean, oh, picking up all kind of people as long as they're willing to work.

JS: And what kind of pay was this getting?

KH: The pay was---in the ship service department, most was the same as these outside pay, well, you know, the minimum wage to start with and then it all depend what kind of jobs they get.

JS: So for you how was it compared to working with the engineers?

KH: Oh, I had more because it was a more responsible job. Maybe two or three times more responsibility. In those days I think I—I forgot, but I think I start with $400 [per month], and I think I was one of the highest paid civilian employees. The guy tells, the officer asks me, "How much do you want?"

I thought and thought. I said, compared to my job with the engineers, you know, I was getting [$]250 [per month] I think, then plus overtime. I say, "Oh, how about [$]400?"

He say, "Okay." (Chuckles)

JS: That was per month?

KH: Month. It's not like now in those days, you know. Now at [$]400---even the kids at the store, you're working as courtesy clerk get about that (laughs). So times have changed. I think the minimum wage [during the war] was sixty-five cents [an hour] for employees like laundry workers and. . . . I forgot but that's almost—it's not like now. Now the minimum wage is what? Four dollar eighty-five cents or something like that. Well, times have changed.

JS: So what other kind of things were happening at the naval air station? What other kinds of work were they doing there?

KH: I guess was mostly training station for the aviators. And the group that was over there, the regular naval personnel even, they were just acting as a support group, you know, getting things ready, keeping the place in shape and all that. But most of the aviators, they go there and they train, and when they are trained, off they go to down under [to islands in the South Pacific].

We had people from, well, from the battleships, too. The regular navy come in. They pick up supplies, some of them. Some of them, they might have maybe got wounded or something happened to them at sea. They come back, pick up their clothes. Maybe their ship was sunk for all I know. But they had part of the—mostly taken care of by the navy personnel themselves, because in the ship service department we have four navy men and civilians working there.

JS: So how much did you hear about the war through these people who were coming back?

KH: Not much. And what we hear we try to forget right about it (chuckles) because as I say, we were kind of extra cautious maybe in spreading news.

JS: Don't want to spread rumors.

KH: Yeah. Though some of the boys came back from---I remember certain marines at Camp Maui became good friends, some of 'em. And every time they go out they come and see me, say oh, they going out. And that battle of Iwo Jima [February 19–March 16, 1945], one of the men, as soon as he came back from R and R [rest and relaxation], he came to see me. "Oh," so I said, "how's your buddies? I don't see them with you."

He said, "They're all gone," that they were killed at that battle.

He said he didn't know how he had lived through it. But we never talk about those things outside, no [matter] how much we hear, because everybody know there's a war going on and they didn't want to be the one to spread, like you say, false rumors around the place.

JS: Did they talk with you a lot about what they were doing in the war?

KH: No. Because they said they'd be going off to someplace and then after a while we find out. But I never tried to ask them and they never say anything unless in the course of conversation, you know, it just come out, but. Those the time why, a guy would tell me something and I forget it the next minute.

JS: So were you friends with a lot of them then?

KH: Oh, yes. I knew lots of the navy men that work in the ship service because I'm always in contact with them. And then, of course, some of these officers and other personnel that comes to the ship service for supplies, I knew quite a few of them at that time.

JS: So did, you know, working at the Pu'unēnē station, I know you said in the other job with the engineers you folks would hear about things that were going to happen.

KH: Yeah.

JS: Was that the same at Pu'unēnē?

KH: No, exactly different. Maybe it's---we hear things usually after it happened or when we know that a bunch of planes are going out for, you know, after training. They say oh, so-and-so squadron are leaving. So that's all right, they leaving and we know where they going, so

nothing was said, you know. Because we know they going down under because they were fighting around Saipan and the South Pacific and then they were going to Iwo Jima. We can kind of trace their, what you call, routes, you know, but that was about all. And then after it happened, well I guess like in all wars, the victories were plenty. That, you know, they can hear lots of it. But the defeats, if any, well they keep it kind of quiet, eh (chuckles).

JS: So what kind of---was there any special kind of security around the base?

KH: No. As far as I was concerned, nothing special. Of course when we go in there to work there'll be marines guarding the gates, you know. They check us in, then check us out. That's all. Usually the civilian employees, even myself, we park the cars outside of the confines of the base. And then we catch the bus going in to the various offices. Sometimes I drive my car in when there's something special to do or it was a little off timing, well, when the buses don't run. But we sign in and sign out. And after a while the marines know me and they know my car so they look at me, they say, "Go work." But there was nothing special.

I understand though that before I went there, the civilian workers had to learn how to carry rifle and they had little drills in case Japan would attack, but there was no. . . . As a matter of precaution I guess, you know, in those days Japan was on the rising, eh. Community always was scared that they would come to Hawai'i, until after the Battle of Midway. [U.S. victory at the Battle of Midway, June 4–6, 1942, marked a turning point in the war and removed any real threat of Hawai'i being invaded by Japanese armed forces.]

JS: And at that time when you were still working at. . . . Were you still working at Ah Fook's, too?

KH: Not too much. But I used to go down once in a while after work because when I was, at that time, at the naval air I worked kind of long. Sometimes I come home after dinner. They feed me, you know, when I have too many reports to make. They say, "Oh, you have to work tonight." So they send a sailor to go over to the mess hall, get whatever food they had and bring it over. And then they escort me home. And it was so funny because they can go along the roadside with all the lights, you know, the road with all the [jeep] lights on. Whereas us, we have all the little dinky blue lights that I was telling you about (chuckles). So I get one jeep in front of me and one in the back of me, guide me, take me home till they reach here, they see I come up my driveway, then they turn around, go home.

JS: So they could have their lights, regular [car] lights?

KH: Yeah. The armed personnel could have the lights on. Yeah, it was so funny to see those people escorting me home. But they were afraid that because I come home late at night, some other, what do you call, the sentries would take a pop at me (laughs). But never did have any trouble.

JS: What was your wife doing at this time?

KH: She was working at the [T. Ah Fook] store.

JS: Still yet?

KH: Mm hmm.

JS: And she would work during the days, though?

KH: Yeah, she work during the day. And she has her own car coming home so.

JS: So how did you folks, your family, how did you folks handle the situation with the rationing?

KH: You mean at the base?

JS: Well, you know, how did you and your wife. . . .

KH: Oh well, we have other people, we have other employees, the regular employees do that. I know what's going on but as far as that rationing is concerned though, I don't take part in it because I'd be working outside.

JS: No, but buying things for yourself.

KH: Well, it was the same as. . . . Just buy the bare necessities like anybody else.

JS: Did you get any extra things because you worked at the store?

KH: Well, I don't think so because they have—what kind of board they call that? They allocate so much rice to each store, so much canned goods, you know, any kind of—everything was rationed. So naturally if we take what not supposed to be our share, somebody else is going to suffer. And they have there the checks to see that everything is on the up-and-up.

JS: What about from the store at the naval air station?

KH: Oh, no rationing at all. The hardest part was to get the materials or merchandise that they want. But when the merchandise come, it was first come, first served.

JS: And that wasn't by credit, right?

KH: No. They have the---they don't do it credit business at the ship service. Everything was cash because you never know when a guy would be in today and go off tomorrow.

JS: Okay, so how long did you work at the air station?

KH: I work at there till 1946, after the war was over. Nineteen forty-six, '47. Anyhow after the war was over, and I was trying to get my release before then, before that base was closed. But they want me to stay because they say oh, there were rumors that they were going to reopen Naval Air [Station], Pu'unēnē. And they want me to be there when it's open, to run the ship service department.

JS: Okay, let me turn the tape over first.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

KH: I was kind of lucky because I get along fine with the commanding officers of my department. So that's why I stayed there. I always used to say that I closed up Naval Air Pu'unēnē for them (chuckles) because there was an old man that I called Pop, and a young boy then, a guy I called Red Franco, that was at the base after a while. All the civilians left. And all the naval air was transferred to, the civilians were transferred to Naval Air [Station], Kahului. So the three of us had the whole base to ourselves and we didn't know what to do. We used to just sit down there, walk around the (laughs). . . . But they say oh, that there might be an emergency anytime, so.

JS: So what happened to all the military people that were at Pu'unēnē?

KH: They transferred to Kahului. And maybe some of them to Barber's Point.

JS: This was once the war was over?

KH: Yeah. Well, it was a kind of gradual process that they had some people were, you know, cleaning up the base, packing up and all that.

JS: And what happened to the, you know, once all these people were leaving, what happened to the buildings and structures that were there?

KH: Oh, they just stayed there. All bare. You can wander in and nobody be around. All they did was gather dust. They just left it as it is, uninhabited. And there was nobody to take care of 'em. Then after a while they start breaking them down. I don't know. That was after my time. I didn't go around anymore. First thing I know, I see cane field sprouting, you know, cane sprouting in the fields [where the naval air station had been] (laughs).

JS: So what kind of duties did you have then after everyone started leaving the station?

KH: Oh, for a while I was just packing up the records, waiting for something to happen. Because just after the war ended there were lots of civilian jobs, and I had several offers. So I told my commanding officer, "Oh, I want to leave because if I stay here too long I wouldn't have a job outside."

So he said, "No, no. You just hang on." He said, "There's rumors that they going reopen the base." And say, "We want you to be here."

So I just stayed there, just draw my pay and pack all the records. And when the orders finally came to close the base, well, we just marked the records, you know, the boxes, shipped 'em off to Pearl Harbor, and I don't know what they do with them. Maybe dump them in the ocean.

JS: You never thought about going to the [Naval Air Station], Kahului side to work?

KH: No, I never did thought of it because I feel that once the base start to close [at Pu'unēnē], the naval air [at Kahului] was going to close, too. And they were closing, too, at that time.

JS: The Kahului one?

KH: Yeah. They were gradually getting rid of their personnel, and planes were coming in less and less because there was no planes to train at that time. They were not training any more pilots after the war ended.

JS: I'd like to go back a little bit to before the war ended and, you know, the Camp Maui marines were, from the things that I've read, they were really a big presence in Maui. And I was just wondering if you can tell a little bit about how the community related with them.

KH: Well, as far as I'm concerned---well, I didn't have too much dealings with them. The only time I have was some people that would go to Naval Air Pu'unēnē, buy stuff, you know. They come to see me. And I got to be quite friendly with a few of them. But outside of that I didn't know them at all, though I know that they're all, all of them were in Kahului or Wailuku at one time or another—well, on the days when they are off duty. Army trucks would bring them down here in the morning. And evening they set a—I don't know when. There the army trucks come back, pick them up, take them home.

JS: What about some of the welcome-back receptions they had, especially when they came back from major battles and things?

KH: Ah, that was mostly hush-hush affairs. We know they're coming and that's just about all. Because then the---even at that time they say the Fourth Marine [Division] are going come back. You know, there been little more activity in the camps, but as I say, we never tried to, well, stick our noses inside near there.

JS: What about once they started to leave Maui? How did that affect the community and the businesses?

KH: Well, I guess that all the businesses that sprang up during the war just fold up, close up, all the restaurants, and little antique shops, you know, and (chuckles). . . .

JS: Were there a lot of those kind of places that opened up during the war?

KH: Oh yeah, every little place that they can, they open up. Just after the war, no, before the war, there was a depression on Maui, you know, lots of empty stores. But as soon as the war came out, every place you can make a restaurant or selling knickknacks or whatever.

JS: Do you know what kinds of things they would sell?

KH: Oh, postcards, souvenirs, all kind of stuff. In fact, they buy anything to send home because, well, I guess they want to send something home for, you know, as some kind of memento or something like that, so they just buy and send it home.

When my brother now had that little gift shop in Pā'ia selling Oriental goods. . . . And he was selling this—even this little chest, what do you call, hope chest, the cedarwood chest. You seen them with all that *kine* fancy carving and all those. The military people just grabbed all that he had left, and they couldn't buy any [more]. So some that he had that were already damaged and all, he didn't want to sell it because he tell them straight that, "Oh, I can't sell

this because it's damaged."

They say, "Oh, never mind." They say, "We'll send home and they can fix it." (Chuckles)

JS: So your brother opened up this shop?

KH: Well, he had the shop before the war started, and he had to close it up after the war started because he couldn't get any materials to sell, any supplies, because all his stuff came from the Orient, especially Shanghai.

JS: So he was only open for a little while during the . . .

KH: Only a little while. Maybe couple of years. They bought everything he had, from the smallest trinket to, you know, (laughs) to this hope chest.

JS: So what did he do after he had to close the shop?

KH: Well, he went to work for Naval Air [Station], Kahului in the ship service department, too, down there.

JS: So about the same kind of stuff that you were doing?

KH: Yeah, mhm.

JS: What about some of your other brothers and sisters? What kinds of things were they doing during the war?

KH: Well, they were all, what you call. . . . I had a brother that was working for the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration]. Well, whatever he does, I don't know (chuckles) but he was working for them. And then one died during the war from natural causes. My sisters, well, they were at their. . . . They were going to school, you know, one was a schoolteacher. Life used to be the same, outside [of] as I say, there was less of everything to go around.

JS: But everybody managed.

KH: Yeah, we managed.

JS: Okay, so once the war ended and then you were still at the Pu'unēnē [Naval] Air Station. But what were you planning to do, you know, once the station was going to be closed?

KH: Well, keeping books for somebody. (Pause) I guess I didn't think too much of it because I know there were so many jobs after the war that—there were so many jobs available.

JS: So what did you do once you left the station?

KH: I left the place. Then I came back, I spend little more time with the [Ah Fook] store, and then I work for about a year for the Maui County waterworks department. Then I left there.

JS: What were you doing there?

KH: As an accountant. That was when the waterworks board was first formed.

JS: And how different was it from what you had been doing before?

KH: You mean at the waterworks?

JS: Yeah.

KH: Altogether different. I couldn't understand that terminology at first because they have their own, you know, set of language and (chuckles) I had to go and learn it. They talk about the, well, for example, they talk about encumbrance and transmission lines and, you know, rate of flow of water. Those things were kind of foreign to me (laughs). At first I didn't know what they were talking about.

JS: So how did you get that job?

KH: Well, they were looking for somebody and somehow they picked me up to start at first. But I didn't last too long at it because after a year when I took a civil service exam, at that particular time I couldn't pass the exam, though I was the highest of the. . . . I had the highest score but still I couldn't pass it because as I said, I don't know what they were talking about in the test, you know. And in a way I was kind of happy that I didn't stay there with all those troubles they having.

JS: So for the civil service test you mean you knew the most about accounting but you couldn't pass the . . .

KH: Yeah.

JS: . . . their side of the—the terminology.

KH: Yeah, the way they word it.

JS: And then, so after that, then what did you decide to do?

KH: Well, then I opened up my own business as an accountant for a while, and stay at work at the [Ah Fook] store, too. And actually yeah, my business was nothing to talk about because I think I only had about four or five accounts, you know, just to occupy my spare time at that. And people used to come and tell me, "Oh, help me." So. . . .

JS: So this was more personal . . .

KH: Yeah.

JS: For small businesses?

KH: Mm hmm. Mom-and-pop stores, you know. Most of the people knew how to make money, but they were not able to keep a set of books to satisfy the state government or the federal government.

JS: And you were still working at Ah Fook's, too?

KH: Yeah, that was my main job then because in 1955 we move in our present location [at Kahului Shopping Center] and we needed somebody full-time to keep the books.

JS: So before 1955, where was the store located?

KH: It was right in front of the present location, right on the road, well, I mean right on [where] the road is, the road and the store. Right, you know, the. . . . You know, in the old days they don't have too many cars so people would build all their stores, you know, any place, right up to the roadway with a little sidewalk for people to walk in. That's all.

JS: So how had the store changed from during the war and then after the war was over? What kind of changes were there?

KH: Well, after the war we were still doing cash-and-carry. No, not cash-and-carry. [We] run business on a credit basis until the war, until we opened the new store. Then we felt that we don't have enough money to carry the people, you know, because we'd anticipate amount of business we're going to have. And then of course, there's a matter of keeping the books so, you know, and all that. So we told the people that we had to go on a cash-and-carry basis. And well, we polled our customers first, you know. Most of them said, "Oh," they said, "you do what you want."

And some of them stressed—the couple that were managers of the firms, they say, "You got to go cash-and-carry. You cannot go run a supermarket on a charge basis because you're never going to get enough money."

So we took their advice. Then we wrote letters to all our customers saying why we had to go cash-and-carry, and then we arranged for payments, you know. We told them, "You can shop at our store just as before on a cash basis, and whatever you owe now," we say, "you pay what you can every month." Because you're going to want to pay, to change over [from charge to cash], yeah.

And you know, that was the greatest thing I have ever seen. And I never expect it. In fact, nobody did. We had a 100 percent collection on those bills. One of them took over ten years to pay but he paid up. He come in some days with five dollars, you know, he say, "You know, Hew, that's all I can afford this month." He say, "I need the money for something else."

"Oh, yeah. Okay."

Until those days, too, we don't have interest charges. I mean if you owe $100, that's all you owe. It doesn't mean that next month you going owe $103 (laughs) you know, like how credit is being done now. But we never did lose a single penny over that.

JS: What about the goods in the store? The amounts that you folks had, how did it compare with during the war?

KH: Oh, big difference. During the war I think we collect, we would have at the most a couple

thousand dollars worth of groceries and all that. Now I would imagine we would have [$]30-, [$]40-, [$]50,000 at any one time. (Pause) Big difference.

Well in those days, too, during the war and even after that until the late 1960s, '55, '60, you know, most of the—well, there wasn't such a big variety of goods on hand. And then there were not so many companies that were in business as manufacturing, like say, well first for example, pork and beans. Formerly you only have [brands like] Van Camp's maybe. Now you have Van Camp's, Libby's, Del Monte, Dole. I don't know, several others, the small ones, yeah. Before you have only one, one of each kind on the shelf. And then nowadays there are so many different sizes, from way teeny, teeny bits to, you know, bigger cans and bigger. But before, you go, you have one size.

Before on the condiment side you would have red pepper, chili pepper—wait, chili pepper, yeah—the regular black pepper, and what else? Sugar, salt. That's all. And then now you go there. They have hundreds of different items, and if we had the space we could carry, there will be more. You know, you walk into the store, you see any supermarket, they have pepper, oh, they must have about twenty different sizes and different brands and different sizes and. . . . Before there was only one size of each. Oh, and cinnamon, too, before. I think that was about all. But now you walk into the store, you see all kinds. Garlic, salt, oh, I don't know what now. All kinds now.

JS: How fast did all of that change from once the restrictions—the rationing restrictions—were lifted?

KH: Well, it took a little time, of course I couldn't say. Because even the canning people themselves has to change over from the wartime, yeah. And then when they find there [is] slack time and time to think about it, why, they decide to add one item or two and it just keeps on going. And they don't do it unless they find a demand for it. Like cereals. Formerly, all we have I think was Frosted Flakes. And mush, you know, Cream of Wheat. I think they were the standard. But that's all we had. Now you go there you see the whole bloody shelves are. . . . They get all kinds and they're always changing. You notice it yourself. You walk into a grocery store. You walk into, say—you go to Times [Super Market]. Oh, you look at there, you say you could spend the whole day trying to figure out which is which. But before there was no choice. You go there, you pick up what you need, you know. But now if you were to go to buy cereal, you read all there. This one crackling, crackle, this one no sugar, or that other one less fat. All kinds of things.

JS: So did all of these changes, how did it affect your job as the accountant?

KH: Well, actually it didn't affect me at all because all I see the invoice. And I just enter that total [dollar] amount, you know, regardless of what [product] it is. Though now it's a little different now. Everything is put on the computer and what thing and how many ounces and then you can tell what you gotta sell. But when the things first start to come out, they didn't have the computer. The wholesaler would come and send his representative in, and he say, "Oh, we have a new product. How 'bout trying one or two cases?"

"Oh, okay." You know, he wants to sell like that.

But now, why, first thing you're going to do you look at your computer. "Oh, two months

ago when you were here, we had so many cases and we bought so many cases and now we still have so much left. So maybe next time." (Chuckles)

JS: So what about, you know, right after the war was over in 1946, 1947, around there, how was Ah Fook's and some of the other businesses around there? What kinds of noticeable changes were there now that the war was over?

KH: I think only that after a while things start to come in more freely. And in case of, say, one case of condensed milk every month or six months, why, [after the war] you can get practically all you want, that's all. Things were flowing pretty freely.

JS: So once the restrictions on rationing was lifted then how did the customers react to that?

KH: Well, they felt happy I guess, come to think of it, you know. Maybe we took for granted that the things are coming in now so we don't have to worry.

JS: There wasn't any big rush to buy more things?

KH: No. Well, in those days I think, too, that even if you want something—just after war I'm talking about—you don't have the money to buy. But gradually as the effects of the war wore out and local industries, service industries, contracting, and more cars coming in, and this and that, why, things start to change for the better and things start to move a little faster because of the cars around the place.

JS: So how long did you work at Ah Fook's after the war?

KH: Oh, I worked there till I retired in 19—, what, '84?

JS: So you worked there long, long time (chuckles).

KH: Well, we had the employees that work longer. You know, we had a record down there that I'm quite proud of. Our employees as a whole stuck with us through thick and thin, and we have hardly any employees left for another job or so. They work there till they retired and. . . .

JS: So how did everyone feel about the move from, you know, a small market into the Kahului Shopping Center?

KH: Well, at the first we only had about, oh, maybe twelve employees, maybe at the most. Maybe less, I don't know. And we thought it was a big thing because when you compare the old store to the new store, you know, certain space [in the new store] was just as big as the other store before, or bigger even with this warehouse and the restaurant and all. I remember when they were building it. I used to walk across from the old store to the new store, you know, they were building. I look at that place. Jesus Christ! What the heck? What we going put in there to fill it up? (JS chuckles) You know, this seems so huge. I thought we going play a game of softball in there. Look from one corner to the other. It was a---in those days, well, maybe we haven't seen bigger things, but to us it was huge compared to the small little place we had. And now we find it too small (JS laughs).

One thing I noticed though, in the days before we moved in to the new store we had very little vegetables because, as I say, in the old days, the people on the plantations, like the Japanese people, the Portuguese people, each would have a little row of cabbage on the side, and onions—the green onions—the eggplant out there. Outside they would have a patch of sweet potatoes somewheres around the place, you know. And some of them keep chickens and ducks. So when we open our place [at Kahului Shopping Center], we talk about the vegetable department.

"Oh, I don't think we need," I told them, "I don't think we need such a big space for vegetables because everybody has his own, grows his own." And I couldn't foresee the day when they, you know, they have to move from the camps and build a new place where they cannot grow anything. And now we find our vegetable room too small, our special cases section. Too small. That's when all of the big changes I think, in the eating habits as far as we concerned. What I mean is what people would buy.

In the old days I used to go around the camps, and if I see a pear [avocado] tree and there's a pear up there, I say, "Oh, missus, I'd like to get a few pears."

"Oh, take all that you want."

So you go around pick a few and then go home, you know. And they never accept money for it in those days, they just say, "Just take. Go and pick it up yourself."

But now, you go around, you don't even see them trees anymore. So Maui, we have to buy pears all the time. Of course, too, lately with this new fad and all, people now days eat lots of papayas, lots of bananas, lots of apples and green vegetables, you know. They eat more than before because for health reasons. They go to a doctor and say, "Oh, doctor, I get trouble here and there."

"Oh, you go eat papaya." Or, "You eat banana for the potassium."

So all these old folks would come and start buying. And sometimes I'll, with some of these old folks that I know for quite a while, I used to go to their homes. We used to laugh at each other because we have to, you know, we see him buying some papayas and bananas. And I used to tell them, I say, "You remember the days when you used to give me papayas and sweet potatoes and all that?"

They say, "Yeah." They say, "Not anymore. (Laughs) We got to buy 'em now. We can't grow 'em anymore." That was one of the biggest changes, I think, from the old days.

JS: So before you retired, did you, did the market start to use computers and things by then?

KH: After that.

JS: After.

KH: In my, when I---computers were just starting to come in. And at that time it was not perfected, like anything else. Well, we thought of buying computers at that time but when I went around and I see the mistakes that they make, why, I thought they were—it wasn't

worthwhile. Because in the old days, just for as an example—of course it didn't happen to us so often—we received a bunch of paints, you know, paint to paint houses with, paints. And brushes. Who the heck ordered that? We're not in the painting business. So I went to check. I check with the buyer. He said, "No, we didn't order it."

So we wrote a letter to the company, said we received all these things and what they want us do? Send the stuff back? Back came the answer. They say, "We don't know who order that thing, so you sell it for what you can get and forget about it." And they say, "We just cancel the bill." They said it costs 'em more time to look for the, you know, what it's all about and. . . . So they say, "You just get rid of it and we cancel the bill. Sell it for what you can get."

So I said, "Gee, that's no way to do business." But after a while, now that it's perfected, well, we have a [computer system].

JS: So once you retired, then what kinds of things did you do?

KH: Just stay home. I still go down to the store, talk story with the old folks. And raise a few pigeons as a hobby. That's all.

JS: Okay, well, thank you very much for talking with me. This is very interesting.

KH: Well, I like to talk about the times that happen before, but kind of forgetful now, you know. Not too young anymore. Don't remember those things until we start talking about it and, you know, things start to creep up.

JS: Well, was there anything else you wanted to add about the war?

KH: Naw, I don't think so.

JS: Okay, well, thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

AN ERA OF CHANGE

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